

JERRY TODD'S CUCKOO CAMP

BY LEO EDWARDS

To
Pirates Bend,
Scotch Cemetery,
Bibbler Farm,
County Farm

Willow patch

Happy hollow

Cat farm

Street

Bid's home

Creek

Street

Hom of
Jerry Red Rory

Street

Town Hall

Zulu

Zulutown

Treebury

Main

Street

Old Hospital

Peg's home

Beaut parlor

School

Street

Creek

office

Brick Yard

School

Parrot house

old Warmly house

Dock

ELK ST.

Scoop's house

OAK ST.

Short St

Canal

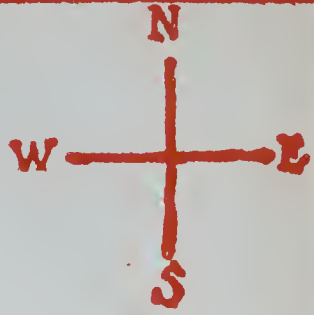
Public Dock

Fourth Quarry

Cement Mill

MAP OF

Road to Ashtown →



Depot



Chicago and Rock Island R.R.

Street

Poppy's
Pickle
Parlor

Street

Factory district

Main

Street

Street

Stores

Church

Canal

Old
Carriage factory



School Street

Hill

Stores

Tutter
Times

Jewelry
Store

Grant St.

Poppy's
home

Elm St.

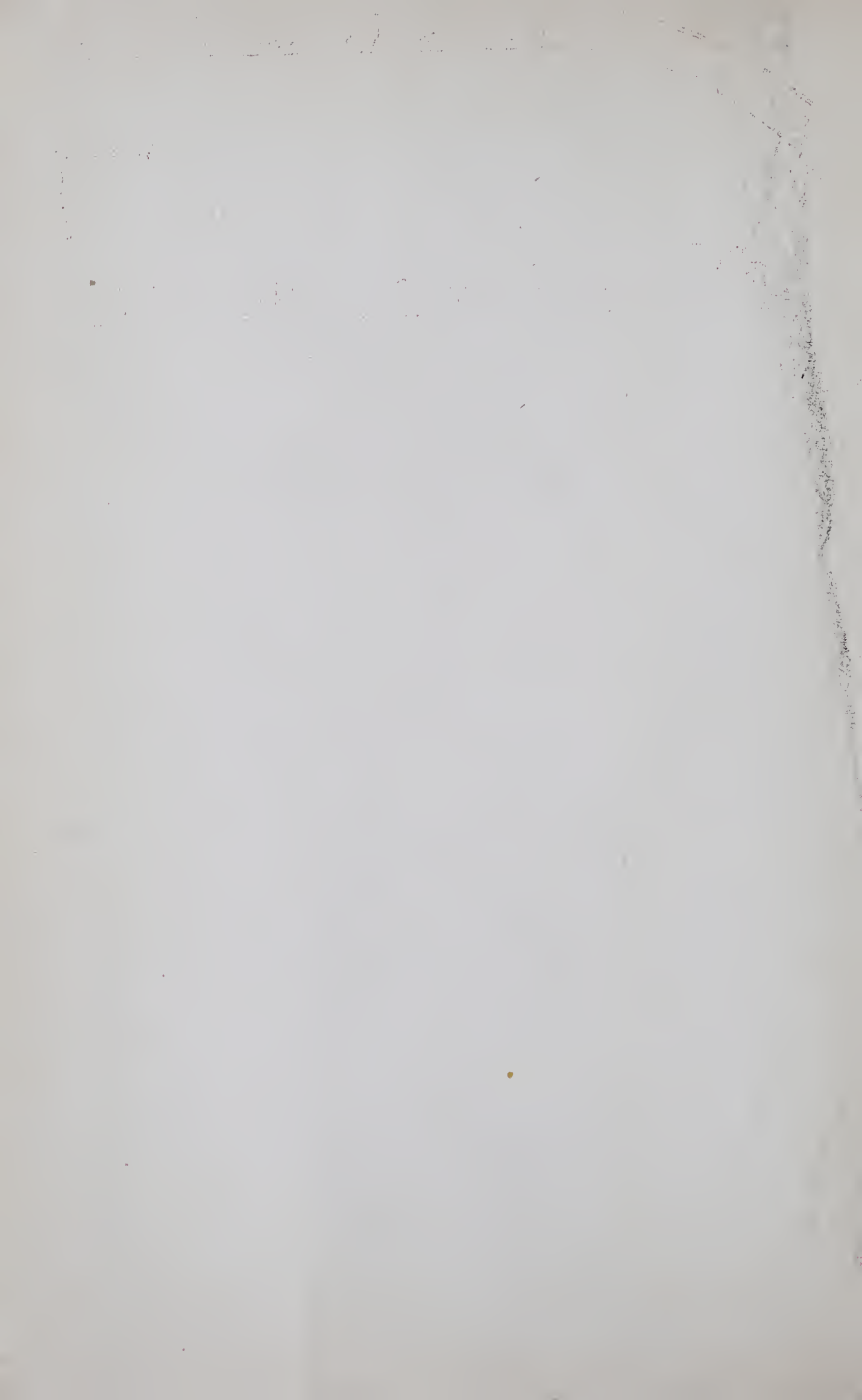
Canal



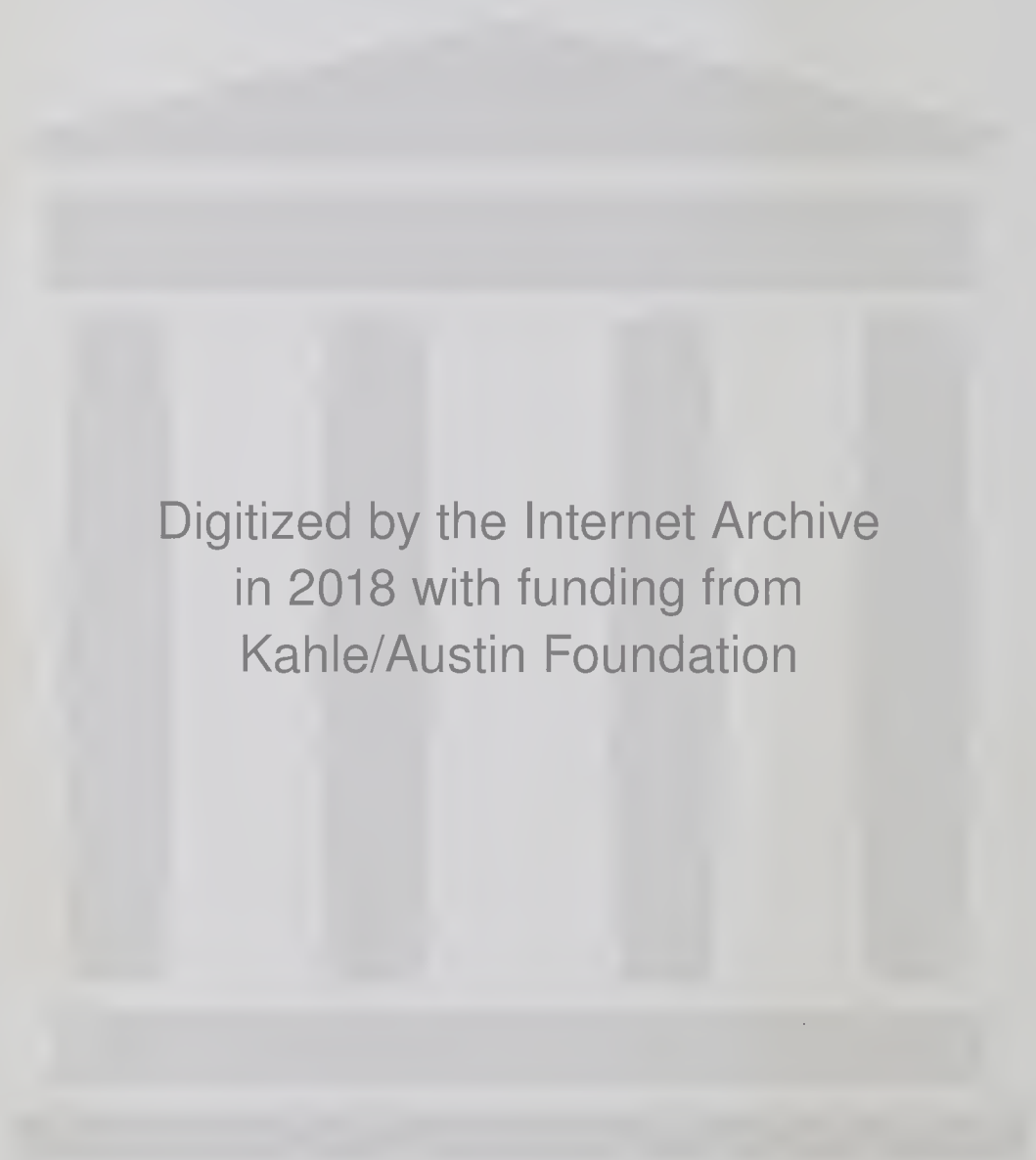
To Ashton →



TUTTER ILLINOIS



JERRY TODD'S
CUCKOO CAMP



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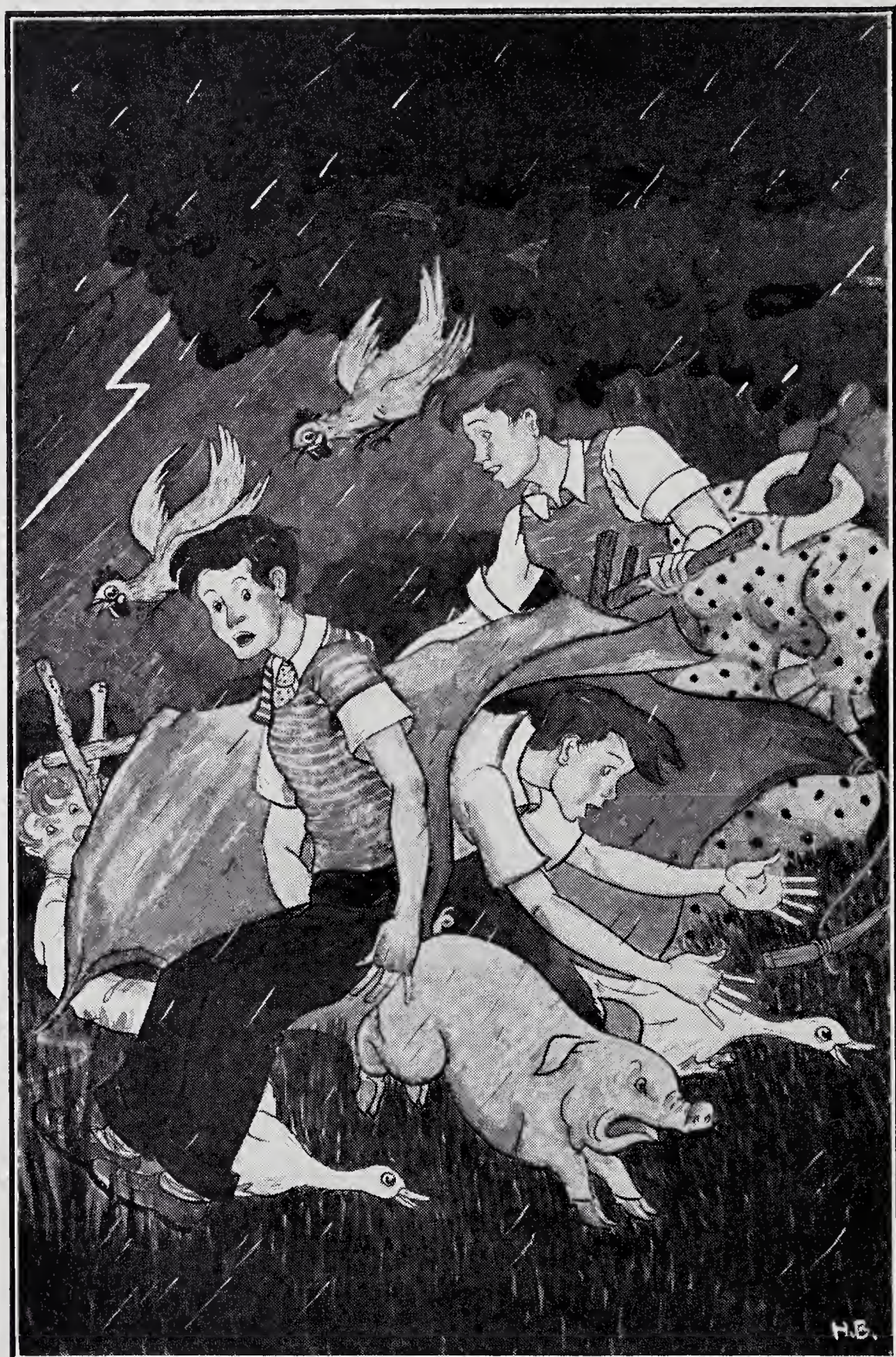
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A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND BLEW THE CANVAS AWAY.
Jerry Todd's Cuckoo Camp

Frontispiece (Page 126)

JERRY TODD'S CUCKOO CAMP

By

LEO EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF

THE JERRY TODD BOOKS

THE POPPY OTT BOOKS

ILLUSTRATED BY

HERMAN BACHARACH

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TO
MY TWIN GRANDSONS
TOM AND GENE

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LEO EDWARDS' BOOKS

Here is a list of Leo Edwards'
published books:

THE JERRY TODD SERIES

JERRY TODD AND THE WHISPERING MUMMY
JERRY TODD AND THE ROSE-COLORED CAT
JERRY TODD AND THE OAK ISLAND TREASURE
JERRY TODD AND THE WALTZING HEN
JERRY TODD AND THE TALKING FROG
JERRY TODD AND THE PURRING EGG
JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE
JERRY TODD, PIRATE
JERRY TODD AND THE BOB-TAILED ELEPHANT
JERRY TODD, EDITOR-IN-GRIEF
JERRY TODD, CAVEMAN
JERRY TODD AND THE FLYING FLAPDOODLE
JERRY TODD AND THE BUFFALO BILL BATHTUB
JERRY TODD'S UP-THE-LADDER CLUB
JERRY TODD'S POODLE PARLOR
JERRY TODD'S CUCKOO CAMP

THE POPPY OTT SERIES

POPPY OTT AND THE STUTTERING PARROT
POPPY OTT'S SEVEN-LEAGUE STILTS
POPPY OTT AND THE GALLOPING SNAIL
POPPY OTT'S PEDIGREED PICKLES
POPPY OTT AND THE FRECKLED GOLDFISH
POPPY OTT AND THE TITTING TOTEM
POPPY OTT AND THE PRANCING PANCAKE
POPPY OTT HITS THE TRAIL
POPPY OTT & Co., INFERIOR DECORATORS

THE NEW POPPY OTT DETECTIVE STORIES

THE MONKEY'S PAW
THE HIDDEN DWARF

JERRY TODD'S CUCKOO CAMP

CHAPTER I

THE SAME OLD GANG!

MY STORY starts in a rowboat in the winding tree-hung Tutter canal.

Peg Shaw was rowing. Scoop Ellery and Red Meyers were giggling together in the back seat. I was up front counting telephone poles.

"Hi there, Jerry Todd!" Red waved to me in his nonsensical way, acting as though he had just discovered for the first time that I was there. "What are you doing up there?—winking at the mud turtles as we go by?"

"No," I handed back, "I'm knitting a ruffled radiator cap for a three-legged bicycle."

"Plenty good!" he laughed. "But what *are* you doing, Jerry? I've been watching you. And every minute or two you screw up your face like you were having a tooth pulled."

"I've been counting."

"Well, if it's that much of a strain on you, you better ease up, or you'll have a mental breakdown. Anyway, we're almost there. I can see a

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water tower up ahead. And I've had my eyes on that big grain elevator for the past five minutes."

More of the sleepy little town came slowly into sight.

"Where are we going to tie up?" I asked Red, peering ahead for a place.

"At the foot of the main street, I suppose."

"Is there a dock there?"

"You ought to know—for you've been there yourself."

"Only twice. And I don't remember anything about the dock."

"But you do remember that bridge up ahead, don't you?"

"Not particularly."

"Well, that's the main-street bridge—the street comes down that hill on the left where you see all those brick buildings, and across the bridge. And the dock is just this side."

"Oh, sure!" I told him, getting closer. "I remember the dock now—and that rusty old bridge, too. Boy, they don't believe in wasting any paint on it, do they?"

"Nor on their stores, either," he criticised.

"Shush! Shush!" cautioned Scoop, with an amused look at Peg. "Don't poke fun at the stores, fellows. Remember, this is the world's chief shopping center."

"Oh, look!" Red suddenly clutched Scoop's arm, monkey-fashion, as a car rumbled over the bridge. "They've actually got autos over here."

"Maybe that was Peg's uncle, hurrying down to the dock to meet him," laughed Scoop.

"How about that, Peg?" asked Red. "Does your uncle own a car?"

Peg gave one of those big easy grins of his.

"Naw," he grunted, steadily pulling away on the oars. "He rides around in a wheelbarrow."

Which shows you what a jolly happy-go-lucky bunch we were. There's always a lot of nonsensical talk like that when we're together. Peg's the steadiest one of us, and the biggest, with expressive black eyes that can snap threateningly one minute and dance with fun the next. The oldest of eight children, he often has to help out at home and so doesn't always have as nice clothes as the rest of us, or as much spending money. But he's a fixed member of our gang. Boy, we couldn't get along without husky, dogged, good-natured old Peg!

Red, on the other hand, is the smallest member of our gang—and the mouthiest! He has one sister—and, boy, do *they* go it at home! Whenever he's around there's always fun, for he's plum full of it. Even those freckles of his, and his tousled red hair, make you want to laugh at him. When teased too much, though, or pushed around, he can fly up like a red-headed wildcat. And then, boy, can he scrap! Um-um!

Scoop is more like Peg—more thoughtful and deliberate, I mean—but not at all Peg's equal in size or strength. There are three children in the

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Ellery family, one older than Scoop and one younger. Tall and slim, with black eyes and black hair, and undeniably the neatest one of us all, he's a pretty nice-looking boy, and pretty blamed smart, too. He gets that from his father, who runs a general store.

Red's father, I possibly should have mentioned, runs the Tutter picture theater, Peg's is a painter and paper hanger, and mine runs a brickyard. I'm the only one of the gang without brothers or sisters. In looks, I'm a lot like Scoop, though my hair and eyes aren't quite so dark. They're more of a brown. He and I are just about the same height, too.

We were all born in the little town of Tutter, Illinois, Red and I in the houses that we still live in on Main Street, and Scoop and Peg a few blocks away. We were twelve when we formed our gang. First Red and I kind of teamed up together. Then, needing a leader with a lot of clever ideas, we took in Scoop, which improved our gang a lot. Still, we weren't quite strong enough to hold our own with some of the town's other gangs, so finally we took in Peg, the biggest boy for his age in the whole community.

There are a lot of little towns like Tutter and Steam Corners up and down our canal. Years ago a lot of grain was hauled up and down this canal, into Chicago at one end and into and down the Illinois river in barges at the other end. The big grain elevators that were used so much then are still standing on the canal bank, but mostly

unused now, as that type of transportation has dwindled to almost nothing. But the canal itself, I suppose, will always be there. At least I hope so, for it gives us a lot of fun. In the summer we often row over to Ashton, the county seat. It's just ten miles east. We often camp on Oak Island, too, which is the other side of Ashton—between there and Steam Corners. And in the winter we use the canal for skating, often going miles in both directions. So, as you can see, it is a pretty nice thing for us.

But maybe I had better hurry on with my story.

It was the first day of September. School was to start in Tutter on the fifth, and needing some new school clothes, Peg that morning had gotten us together, telling us if we'd go over to Steam Corners with him, where he had an uncle in the clothing business, he'd do all the rowing.

The trip would save him money, he said, and by poking along both ways, and making a day of it—a sort of vacation farewell, as it were—we could have all kinds of fun.

There was nothing directly in Steam Corners to interest us. But as Peg had said, we'd find plenty of fun on the way, and particularly when we came to Oak Island in the big wide-waters.

Those of you who live near a canal like ours will know what I mean by a "wide-waters." A canal, as you probably know, isn't very wide. Boats can pass only in places where the canal has been widened out, and these places are called wide-waters. The Oak Island wide-waters that

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you are going to hear so much about in my story is partly a natural wide-waters. Before the canal was built there was a big swamp there, with a high, hilly, rocky knoll in the middle. Naturally when the canal was put through, and the wide swamp flooded, the hilly knoll became an island. It was early named Oak Island by the passing canal-boat captains, because of a huge oak tree that shaded its highest point.

It had been many months now since we had camped together on Oak Island, having had jobs all summer. We were eager to see it again and had set out in high feather, not with Peg doing all the rowing as he had agreed, but with each of us taking turns.

Nor was there any poking along, as Peg had first suggested. That would have been fun, for there were plenty of things to see along the canal's course, but we'd get more fun out of the trip, we all agreed, on Oak Island.

So the plan was to row right along, not even stopping at the island on the way over, but getting through in Steam Corners and back to the island just as quickly as we could. We should be back by noon, we estimated, which would give us the whole afternoon there.

And what a grand and glorious afternoon it was going to be! Again we'd see the old spring, where the King's Silver had been hidden away so many years, as mentioned in my "Pirate" book. We'd see the smoky-walled old cave, too, mentioned in my "Oak Island Treasure" book, and

the two new caves, mentioned in my "Whispering Cave" and "Caveman" books. It was to be an afternoon of afternoons, all right! The more we talked about it, as we rowed along, with the warm morning sun trying to get at us through the arched overhanging trees, the more eager we were to get there and get the fun started.

My job, up front, was to count the telephone poles along the towpath paralleling the waterway, a new rower taking his place every fifty poles. Peg had started, followed by Red, then Scoop, then myself. Now it was almost time for Red again.

"You better get ready," I warned him.

But he was too busy giggling with Scoop over something to hear me.

It was something about a girl, and Peg. He'd probably find her waiting for him on the dock, they said.

At mention of the dock, Peg stopped and turned.

"You're crazy," he told the two gigglers. "There isn't anybody waiting on the dock. I can't see a soul there."

"There's still time for her to show up," Scoop laughed meaningly.

"Oh, they're talking about you and a girl, Peg," I told him. "Wake up!"

"Huh!" he snorted, going back to his rowing.

"What's her name, Peg?" Red teased.

"Prunella," supplied Scoop, with dancing eyes.

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"*Prunella?*" tittered Red. "Was she named after a prune?"

"Sh-h-h!" cautioned Scoop. "Peg won't like it if you call his Steam Corners blonde a prune."

"Say, I wish you guys would choke," growled Peg, who can stand almost anything better than being kidded about girls.

"Where did he meet her, Scoop?" Red kept it up.

"At a taffy pull, when he was over here last winter," Scoop made up.

"At a taffy pull?" tittered Red. Then he let out one of his crazy yaps. "So that's where he got stuck on her, huh? Haw, haw, haw! What did he do?—sit down in some of her taffy?"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised."

"Fifty," I counted aloud. "All right, Red!—it's your turn again."

"*My* turn?" he bellowed, his face reddening. "What have you been doing, you big robber?—counting by fives?"

"No, I've been counting by ones, and I counted fifty honestly," I affirmed. "So take the oars and finish up."

"I bet you ran in a dozen houses on me at the last," he further grumbled, never very willing when there was work to do.

"Make him row, Peg," I egged. "Maybe if he uses up some of his energy doing that he won't have so much gab."

"No," Peg kept on, square-jawed. "I'll finish. It's just a few yards, anyway. Besides," he

added, grimly eyeing his two tormentors in turn, "I want to keep the oars in my own possession. I may be wrong," he purred, "but somehow I have the feeling that someone in this boat is going to get a nice sloppy bath if I hear any more of this 'prune' talk. Do you get the point, fellows?"

But Red and Scoop were having too much fun to be squelched by a threat like that.

"Oh-oh!" Red suddenly raised in his seat, craning ahead. "I just saw her, Scoop."

"Peg's blonde? Where?"

"Crossing the bridge up there."

What Scoop saw on the bridge set him to giggling so hard that he almost fell out of the boat.

"Did you hear that, Peg?" he gurgled. "Red can't tell your blonde from a yellow cow. Boy, I'd resent that if I were you. A cow! Haw, haw, haw!"

"Oh!" Red craned again, pretending surprise. "Is it a cow? Well, well, so it is. My mistake, Peg, and your treat. But, anyway," he ended, with an impish grin, "she's got blonde hair. I wasn't fooled on that point."

"But couldn't you see the horns?" tittered Scoop.

"They looked to me like a couple of yellow pigtailed standing up," tittered Red.

Splash! went Peg's right oar, with the two in the back seat trying to duck the shower and lustily yelling for mercy.

"Please!" begged Scoop, as Peg grimly poised

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for another splash. "Gosh, you'll have us soaked! That isn't fair."

Splash! went the oar again.

"Hey, cut it out!" squawked Red, getting the worst on his side that time. "We haven't splashed you. Use a little sense."

"I warned you," grated Peg.

"But we were just joking," whined Red. "Can't you take a joke? Gosh, don't splash again, Peg. My shirt's wet already."

"Are you going to keep shut?"

"Oh, sure!" Red promised unwillingly. "Only don't drown us."

We were almost at the dock now. So getting ready with the tie-rope, I jumped out when we bumped and tied up, Peg nimbly following.

"What does your watch say now, Scoop?" he asked.

"Ten-thirty."

"Yes," Red put in, scowling, "but that doesn't mean that it's time for another shower bath, you big fire-plug!"

"You deserved all you got," Peg told him.

"I'll have to stay here and dry out. You better stay, too, Scoop."

"I was going to. For someone ought to stay with the lunch, anyway."

"What all have we got?" asked Peg, with a quick look at the basket.

"I brought half a chocolate cake," Red reported. "Mother made me some sandwiches, too."

"And I brought a pie and some pickles," reported Scoop.

"Not *olives!*" Red promptly turned up his freckled nose.

"No, dills."

"*Dills!*" Red happily whooped it up this time, rubbing his stomach. "Oh, boy! I can hardly wait."

"I brought a lot of fruit," I reported in turn. "Mother made me some sandwiches, too—and some potato salad."

"Oh, yes!" Red came in again. "I've got some baked beans. I almost forgot. A whole crockful."

"Which all sounds good," nodded Peg. "But how about some hot-dogs? A picnic isn't complete to me without hot-dogs."

"Absolutely not!" promptly agreed Red, who I honestly think could eat a whole cow if he tried. I've never heard him say yet that he was full. What would fill up an ordinary boy is just a starter for him. "Get a dozen apiece, Peg. Six for dinner and six for supper."

"Nobody said anything about staying over here for supper," Scoop told him.

"But why not? It'll be our last chance to see the island this summer. So why not make the best of it?"

"All right," Peg considered it settled, starting off, "we'll make it twelve apiece and stay for supper. Come on, Jerry."

CHAPTER II

AN EXCITING PROSPECT

JUST OFF the dock, Peg and I ran into a gang of kids trailing a hand organ around.

"That's the first time I ever saw a hand organ without a monkey," laughed Peg, as the noisy outfit passed us, the swarthy black-haired owner vigorously cranking away and the kids merrily dancing along behind.

"He sold his monkey," one of the kids stopped to tell us, evidently having overheard what Peg said.

"No, he didn't, either," another kid quickly corrected. "He didn't *sell* his monkey—he just rented it."

"Well," laughed Peg, "I know where he can get another one, if he wants it."

"Where?" the two kids eagerly asked together.

"There's a swell red-headed monkey sitting over there in a rowboat," Peg pointed back.

"Let's go see it," the first kid eagerly suggested.

"Sure! Let's!" the other quickly agreed.

And off they went on the run, the others following.

"Boy, that's a good joke on Red," laughed Peg. "I'd like to see his face when the kids start asking him where the red-headed monkey is. He'll

quickly catch on. He's not so dumb. But what are you staring at?"

"I've been watching that hand-organ man down the street."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Well, look at the way he's hurrying along. You'd almost think, from his actions, that the cops were after him."

Peg gave a big yawn.

"Ho-hum! Old Sherlock's at it again, huh?"

"But don't you think he acts queer, Peg?" I pressed.

"No," came bluntly.

"Oh, you'd say that no matter how he acted," I growled.

"Now, listen, Sherlock! I know you've solved a lot of mysteries. And I admit that you're good. *Plenty* good, in fact! But suppose you wait and pose for your picture when we have more time. We have more important things to do right now."

I suddenly clutched his arm.

"Did you see that?" I cried.

"What?" he growled.

"Didn't you see the furtive way he looked back, Peg?"

"What was that word again, Jerry?" he started to grin.

"Furtive," I repeated.

"Boy, you *are* good, and no mistake. Old Sherlock Holmes himself couldn't talk bigger than that. But what does it mean?"

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“Well, *sneaking* then—if that fits your brain better.”

“I know what sneaking means, all right.”

“That’s the way he looked back. And then he ducked into those lumber piles down there.”

“Maybe he’s picking out lumber for a house.”

“It’ll only take a minute or two, Peg—let’s run down and see what he’s doing. I’m curious.”

“Not me, Sherlock.”

“But you’ll wait for me, won’t you?” I begged.

“Oh, I suppose so,” he gave in. “But I still don’t see any sense in it. And I’m not going to wait very long, either. So if I’m not here when you get back, wait for me at the boat.”

Maybe it *was* kind of silly of me—making so much of the organ-grinder’s actions. But when you get going on mysteries, that’s the way you are. It gets into the blood, I guess. Besides, that wise-crack of Peg’s about me posing for my picture had sort of nettled me. I *was* a registered Juvenile Jupiter Detective. He knew it, too. And I felt that when I saw something like that, that might well be investigated, I should be given the time to do it.

So off I went in my very best detective style, with him growling after me, first skirting the lumber piles and then guardedly climbing to the top of one.

But not with any final credit to the Juvenile Jupiter Detective organization!

An old man and woman in a rickety one-horse

farm wagon had just pulled up beside Peg when I got back.

"Who are they?" I nudged him.

"Search me," he shrugged. "They came up the street looking around as though they were lost. And when they spotted me, over they came."

"Air you the b'y with the boat?" the thin-faced white-haired driver then asked Peg, eyeing him closely.

"Yes, what's the matter?—is it in your way?"

"Oh, no, no!" the old man hastily wagged. "Not a bit of it. But I jest wanted to make sure that I was talkin' to the right b'y. I asked fur you t'other side of the canal, and they told me as how I'd be more likely to find you over here."

A horned head here came into sight around the back of the wagon.

"Oh-oh!" I gurgled, clutching Peg's arm. "It's your yellow cow, Romeo. She's tied to the end-gate. See?"

"*What?*" he stared, stepping back for a better look. And finding it did look like the same cow, he stiffened. "Say, do you suppose those two smart alecks back there in the boat—or is this some trick of yours, Sherlock?" he swung on me, scowling.

"Don't be crazy," I told him. "I was off in the other direction."

"And what did you find out?" he asked quickly.

"Nothing," I grunted.

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"The prisoner wouldn't talk, huh?" he grinned.

"Prisoner nothing! I couldn't even find him. He was gone when I got there."

The woman, much fleshier than the man, but like him gray and wrinkled, had been watching us with suspicious eyes.

"What are they talking about, pa?" she anxiously turned to her companion, cupping the ear nearest to him with her gloved hand. "I've been watching their lips, but I couldn't make it out. And you know how poor my hearing is. Tell me, pa."

"It's the b'y with the boat, ma," he shouted to her.

"What?" she got her ear still closer, straining to hear.

"It's *him*, ma. The b'y who wants to rent our Bossy Bell."

Peg almost keeled over.

"Oh, so they're going to rent me their Bossy Bell, huh?" he blinked. Then he broke into a crazy grin. "Now, isn't that just too ducky! Did you hear that, Jerry?"

"Bossy Bell must be the cow," I told him wonderingly.

"No!" came scornfully. "Now, did you figure that out all by yourself, Sherlock? Boy, you *are* getting good. All you need is one of the cow's footprints and you'll have an open and shut case."

"But people don't rent out cows," I studied over that. Then I thought of what the kids had told us. "Nor monkeys, either!" I added excitedly.

"What's a monkey got to do with this?" grunted Peg.

"But don't you remember what the kids told us about the organ-grinder renting his monkey? Now, these people are trying to rent you their cow. Which proves that there's some connection between the cow and the monkey. And if the monkey's involved, so is its owner. Boy, I knew I was right about him! You can't fool a Juvenile Jupiter Detective. And *you* jeered at me! I guess you can see now who was the smartest. For there *is* some crooked work of some kind going on around here."

"You're still guessing, Jerry," he held off. "You haven't any proof of any actual crooked work. But I'll grant there *is* a riddle here of some kind. Rent me their Bossy Bell, huh? I wonder if they think I rented the monkey, too?"

"They've probably mistaken you for someone else, Peg. But let's listen. Maybe we can pick up something from their talk."

"Well, you know what I told you, pa," we first heard the old lady say. "And you know what I came along for. Much as I want to go on that visit, I'll never consent to him renting our Bossy Bell if he isn't in every way the right kind of a boy."

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"But, ma——"

"Now, pa," she firmly cut him off, "you just keep still till I finish. I didn't say I'd say *no*. If the boy appears to be all right—and we're sure he'll treat Bossy Bell kindly—I'll say *yes*. For if we can get five dollars, that'll pay our train fare there and back. But, pa, we've got to know first *what* he wants her for—and we've got to know he'll be *good* to her. It's a funny way for us to earn five dollars—renting him our only cow! But if everything is all right—and all I've got to do is to take one close look at his eyes, and I'll know—then I'll say yes."

The old man got stiffly down.

"Did you hear that?" he asked Peg. "You see, ma and me haven't very much in this world. We live in a little place jest outside of town. My sister, over in Indiany, has bin wantin' us to come and visit her. And now we can, if we can git five dollars cash fur Bossy Bell fur a week—and know to boot that she's bein' fed and properly cared fur, though she ain't givin' much milk. But ma wants to git a closer look at you so she'll know about you. She wouldn't let me come without her. She said she wanted to see fur herself. She's got some questions to ask you, too—if you'll jest step around on her side, please."

"But, listen!" Peg held back. "You're all wrong about something, mister. I don't want to rent your cow. I think you've got the wrong fellow."

The old man fished a crumpled paper out of his shirt pocket.

"Ain't you *that* b'y?" he asked Peg, handing him the paper.

"What is it?" I asked Peg, crowding at his elbow.

"An advertisement."

"For a cow?"

"Yes, and some monkeys and a whole lot of things."

"Monkeys! Didn't I tell you, Peg?"

"Listen! I'll read it to you. It says: 'Wanted, to rent, for one week, a cow, donkey, kangaroo, parrot, goat, two monkeys, two pigs and a large crate of chickens and ducks. See Dee-Dee Free-ling, Steam Corners.'"

The old man had been closely watching Peg's face, his own growing disappointed.

"Then you ain't the Freeling b'y, huh?" he asked, when Peg finished reading.

"No. I'm Peg Shaw."

"But why did you tell me you were?—and waste my time?" came nettledly.

"You asked me if I had a boat, and I said yes. I never told you I was the Freeling boy. I never even heard of him."

The old man got growling back into his seat and picked up the lines.

"What's the matter, pa?" his wife anxiously inquired, in her high-pitched voice. "Doesn't he want to rent Bossy Bell after all?"

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"We got the wrong b'y, ma. That ain't the b'y we want at all. Giddap, Dobbin!"

And off they went, the old man still growling and the cow trailing sleepily behind.

Peg crazily waved them good-by.

"So long, Bossy Bell!" he called. "Parting is such sweet sorrow!" Then he turned to me with a lovelorn air. "She got me, Jerry!" he romantically clutched his heart. "She got me!"

"Oh, cut out the nonsense and hand me that ad," I returned impatiently.

"But that's the way life is," he dreamily looked down the street, still clutching his heart. "Into our lives romance comes and romance goes. For one brief moment we're lifted into the clouds, and then——"

I finished for him.

"And then you get a good swift kick in the pants," I grimly suited action to the words.

And, boy, did I lay it on!

"What was that for?" he gingerly rubbed himself.

"To bring you back to your senses. Didn't you hear me? Let me have that ad."

He began searching his pockets.

"Did I keep it?"

"I thought you did."

"Oh, sure! Here it is. Gosh, maybe I should have returned it, huh?"

"Dee-Dee Freeling!" I again read the unusual name.

"That's a funny name," laughed Peg. "It sounds like free-wheeling."

Freeling! Free-wheeling!

"Gee, it does, doesn't it?" I laughed.

"Well, Sherlock, are you ready to drop the case now? For you can see that it's nothing that concerns us—nor anything of a criminal nature, either. The hand-organ man was probably just hurrying out of town. And that sneaking look that so excited you was just your imagination."

"Just the same, I'd like to know who this free-wheeling boy is, and why he's renting all these animals."

"You don't know that he's a boy."

"Of course, he is," I quickly pinned that one down. "For didn't the farmer stop *you*? He was looking for a boy, and he thought you were the boy."

Peg began primping.

"Then there must be another good-looking chap around here, huh?"

"But why," I further puzzled, "should any boy, in his right mind, want to rent a cow and a monkey?"

"If you were in your right mind," was Peg's rejoinder, "you'd throw that ad away and forget about it. What business is it of yours if some boy over here wants to rent a cow and a monkey? Let him rent a hippopotamus, if he wants to. Come on."

"No, wait," I told him. "I'm curious."

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"Curious isn't the right name for it, Jerry. You're just plain snoopy."

"The boy must have a boat, too," I figured out.

"My, what marvelous deduction!" Peg pretended amazed admiration. "And they've been wasting time all these years writing detective stories about mere Sherlock Holmes! You've been gypped, Jupiter!"

"And it must be a big boat," I further figured out. "It couldn't be a rowboat, like ours. For you couldn't get a cow and a donkey into a rowboat."

"Not unless you canned them first," came pleasantly.

"But don't you catch on, Peg?" my excitement grew. "This free-wheeling boy has a boat big enough to hold a cow and a donkey—which in itself is unusual. For *I* never heard before of a boy with a boat that big. Now, did you?"

"What of it?" he passed it off with an indifferent shrug. "He may be some rich kid with money enough to buy the moon. You're just overworking your imagination."

"And he wouldn't stock up his boat with a lot of animals," I went on, "if he wasn't going somewhere. But where could a boy go to around here with a lot of animals like that?"

"China ought to give him a nice little trip."

"Oh, he couldn't get to China from here! He's heading for some place near by. Quit your nonsense and help me out."

"Well, then, maybe he's heading for Oak Island."

I could feel my eyes dancing.

"And that's just where we're going! Oh, boy! I thought we were going to have fun there to-day, but it looks now as though we're going to have mystery, too. For any boy who would plan a canal trip, with a lot of animals like that for company, must have some queer reason."

Peg gave me a steady laughing look.

"Jerry, you're a corker! But I'm for you, kid," he thumped me on the back. "I think myself now that we're going to find something besides fun on the island. For if this boy does have a large boat, as you say, where else could he go to from here, but there?"

I again looked at the advertisement.

"And why," I added, "should he take along a cow, donkey, kangaroo, parrot, goat, two monkeys, two pigs and a crate of chickens and ducks?"

"If he's planning to camp there extensively," laughed Peg, "he *could* eat the chickens and ducks."

"How about the donkey?"

"Oof! Consider my suggestion cancelled."

"The boy hasn't left here yet," I did some more quick thinking, "or we would have met him in his boat, or seen something of him when we passed the island. So now," my voice quickened, "let's get our stuff just as quickly as we can and

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get back to the island ahead of him. Of course, while here we'll pick up all the information we can about him, so that we'll best know what to do when he shows up."

Peg gave a funny deep laugh.

"Is there any mention of a cannon in that ad, Jerry?"

"No. What made you think of that?"

"Oh," he chuckled, "I was just wondering if we'd find ourselves ducking cannonballs, when Big Stuff arrived with his armada."

"That wouldn't be likely," I concluded sensibly. "They wouldn't allow anything like that up there. But if he's some spoiled rich kid, wanting the whole place to himself, we may get a nice lively fight out of it."

Peg's eyes looked like big black diamonds.

"Oh, boy!" came gleefully. "Let's keep our fingers crossed, Jerry, and keep hoping. And now let's hurry."

CHAPTER III

THE PLANNED SHIPWRECK

"HAVE YOU got any money, Jerry?" Peg asked, when we were around the corner in the main street.

"A little bit," I told him.

"Enough for the 'weenies' and buns?"

"Oh, no!—not half enough."

He fished out a dollar bill.

"Then take this and we'll divvy up later."

"But why give it to me?" I asked.

"To save time. There's a meat market right ahead of you. And that's my uncle's store directly across the street—if you get through ahead of me."

"But where'll I get the buns?" I called after him.

Gosh, I didn't know the town! And all the way along I felt that the people in the street and stores were staring at me.

"Ask that kid coming up the hill," Peg called back, ducking around a truck.

It was one of the kids we had talked with down by the dock.

"Say, where do you get buns around here?" I asked him, when he came along.

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"In that meat market right there," he pointed.

"Well, that's handy. I hadn't figured on that. But, tell me! Do you know a boy around here by the name of Dee-Dee Freeling?"

"Oh, sure!" the kid nodded. "He's the boy who fixed up that old boat. It's got a steam engine in it, too."

Good work, Jerry! You guessed one hundred per cent on that one.

"I didn't know they had any steamboats left around here," I told him, to further draw him out.

"This one is an old-timer—an old passenger boat that used to carry picnickers up and down the canal years ago. The man who owned it was just about to sell it for junk, when Dee-Dee came along. And do you know, he actually made that old thing run! He stopped the leaks in it, too, though it's still awful rotten. It's a good thing he doesn't intend to use it very long."

"How old a boy is he?"

"Oh, about your age, I guess."

"Is he a smarty?" I further quizzed, eager to learn just how accurately our further theories fitted the facts.

"Dee-Dee?" the kid stared. "Oh, no! He's swell. But what became of that big boy who was with you down by the canal?"

"He just crossed the street to buy some things."

"Well, he better look out," the kid laughed. "For that red-headed boy in the rowboat was

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mad as heck when I asked him where the monkey was. First, he said he was going to smack *me* in the jaw."

"Oh, he was just fooling. We're all good chums. We're from Tutter. But tell me more about this Freeling boy. Is he rich?"

"I don't think *he* is," came thoughtfully, "but they say his aunt is—Aunt Trudy, we call her. She lives in an awful big house. I was there to a party last Halloween. Boy, it was fun! She played ghost. And you ought to see Dee-Dee's room! Say, he has *everything*. His aunt sure is good to him."

"Do his parents live there, too?"

"They're dead, I think."

"When does your school start over here?"

I took a new track.

"A week from Monday."

"Boy, I wish we had another whole week," I spoke longingly. "I know what I'd do."

"What?"

"Go camping. There's a swell place up the canal."

"I bet you mean Oak Island, huh?"

I had expected him to say that!

"Do you fellows camp there much?" I further led him along.

"No, I never camped there myself, but I've been there. Dee-Dee gave a lot of us kids a ride down there the first day he got his boat going. Boy, we had a time getting back, though!"

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"What happened?" I kept the story going.

"The old boiler sprung a leak. Pop! it went, and out poured the steam. But Dee-Dee finally fixed it. He waited till the steam was all out. Then he drove a wooden plug into the hole and fired up again."

"Didn't the plug blow out?" I laughed.

"No. It swelled up and held tight. After that Dee-Dee always carried a lot of plugs along. And when there was a pop! and a hiss, in went another plug. My pa says, though, that one of these days the boiler's going to blow up for good and blow Dee-Dee's head off."

"But if it's that dangerous, doesn't his aunt kick?"

"No. Anything he wants to do is all right with her. And that's what makes that cousin of his so mad. You asked me a minute ago if Dee-Dee was a smarty, and I said no, for he isn't—not the least bit. But that cousin of his is."

"And what's his name?"

"Junior Terry. Nobody likes him, or his father, Mr. Porter Terry, either. They're both built like lard vats."

"Fat, huh?"

"And *how!* The kid calls us hicks, because he came from New York City himself last year."

"I've met a few kids like that, and punched up a few, too."

"He and his father thought they were going to

move right in on Aunt Trudy—but she wouldn't have it. So they rented a house right next door, where they can watch her. What they'd like to do, I've heard my pa say, is to get all her money away from her and kick Dee-Dee out. They sure do hate him—because she likes him so well and does so much for him. And, boy, were they hoppin' mad when they learned that she had bought him an old steamboat, just so he could get shipwrecked! The neighbors heard them over there going for her about it. They said if she didn't stop wasting her money on the boy that way they'd have a doctor examine her head and take her money away from her. And the other day——”

“Just a minute,” I cut in on the serial. “What did you say she bought Dee-Dee the old boat for?”

“So he could get shipwrecked, just like some people he read about in a book. First, he wanted to go right out on the ocean—and did the neighbors laugh when they heard *that!* They thought it was funny for a boy to want to go hundreds of miles, just to be shipwrecked. And now do you know what he's planning to do?”

“I think I have a faint idea,” I spoke somewhat weakly. “But tell me.”

“This very afternoon, if he can get up steam, and his cow gets here, he's going to be shipwrecked on Oak Island.”

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Which was another feather in my cap!—though the case wasn't turning out to be as much of a mystery as I had anticipated.

I had been right about the boat.

I had been right about the boy being rich (for his aunt was rich, which was the same thing).

I had been right about his destination.

I had been wrong about him being a smart aleck.

And not being a smart aleck, there wouldn't be any fight with him on the island, as Peg and I had so eagerly anticipated.

Which gave me three rights and two wrongs—which, I thought, was a pretty good average, and one that any young Juvenile Jupiter Detective could well be proud of.

"So your friend is going up to Oak Island to be shipwrecked, huh?" I laughed.

"Yes."

"But what's he going to do for a storm? Has he got one all ordered?"

"Oh," the kid laughed, "you don't know Dee-Dee! He doesn't need *real* things. He can pretend anything. The shipwreck's to be all pretended. And the storm'll be pretended—unless one just happens to come up. But I bet you he'll make it the best shipwreck and the best storm that anybody ever survived. I'd like to go with him. It's going to be heaps of fun. But my pa says nix. If the old boiler blows up for good this trip, he says, he isn't going to have me com-

ing down in some treetop and breaking my neck."

A cow, donkey, kangaroo, parrot, goat, two monkeys, two pigs and a crate of chickens and ducks! What memories came back!

"Was this book that Dee-Dee got his inspiration from *The Swiss Family Robinson*?" I asked, remembering it so well myself.

"Oh, sure!" the kid's face lit up. "That's it. Have you read it, too?"

"Dozens of times," I told him. "And like Dee-Dee I've often wished that I could do the same things. But I never had a doting aunt to help *me* out, like him. Nor did I ever think of staging a shipwreck so close to home. Boy, he must be an imaginative kid! I'm crazy to meet him—though I had some other ideas about him at first. But I'm glad I was wrong. I bet he's a lot of fun."

"Did you say you're from Tutter?"

"Yes."

"Well, why don't you get in with him and ride back as far as the island with him? I'll look him up, and tell him about you, if you want me to."

"Say!—that'll be swell," I jumped at the chance.

"What's your name?"

"Jerry Todd."

"Jerry Todd?" he repeated, staring. "Why, he already knows you."

"I never heard of him before to-day."

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"But you remember a little English boy named Rory Ringer, don't you?"

"Rory?" I repeated the name, smiling. "Oh, sure! He used to live in our town."

"He lives here now—right across the street from Dee-Dee."

"And that's how you happened to hear about me, huh?" I grinned.

"Yes. He said he used to be in your gang. He's told us all about you."

"He's a swell boy."

"Didn't you really know that he was living here till I told you?" the kid began to show suspicion, thinking, I guess, that I had just been stringing him along to hear him talk.

"Absolutely not," I earnestly crossed my heart.

He was such a trustful, nice-mannered little fellow that I didn't want him to lose faith in me.

"But how then did you happen to come over here?" he puzzled.

I told him.

"Where can I find Rory?" I wound up eagerly.

"In bed," he laughed, completely won over again.

"In bed?" I repeated. "You mean—he's sick?"

"Yes. He's quarantined with the measles."

"Well, that's a disappointment," my spirits fell.

"They just put up his sign this morning. And,

boy, was he mad! For he was going to be Jack Robinson. Now he can't."

"Jack Robinson?" I repeated. Then I tumbled. "Oh, you mean the Jack Robinson in the book."

"That's it."

"And who's going to be Jack Robinson now?" I asked quickly.

"I don't know. Nearly all the kids in our block are quarantined. That's why they put off starting our school another week."

"But Dee-Dee himself is still out, huh?"

"Oh, sure! The measles couldn't catch up with *him*—the way he flies around. It would take a cyclone to catch him."

"And you're sure he hasn't a Jack Robinson yet?" I further studied on that.

"Not that I know of."

"How about the other brothers in the book?"

"He had some boys picked out—like me, I was going to be Francis—but they're all quarantined but me. And I might just as well be! Gee, I wish my pa would let me go!"

I quickly checked over in my mind, taking Peg first. Being the biggest, he would make a swell Fritz Robinson. I could be Jack. Scoop could be Ernest. And Red could be Francis. Why, it was a perfect set-up! It couldn't have been planned any better.

If you have read the book (and what young

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book lover hasn't?), you'll remember these four boys, and how they were shipwrecked with their parents on an uninhabited tropical island. They were Swiss people, which explains how the book got its title—*The Swiss Family Robinson*. They were going somewhere in a ship to set up a new home for themselves, taking along a cow, donkey, pigs, chickens and everything like that that they'd be likely to need, with fruit trees, too, and seeds and supplies of all kinds. Then a storm came up, throwing the ship onto a rock off an unknown coast. The crew took to the lifeboats, evidently forgetting all about the passengers. So the Robinson boys and their parents were left alone on the wrecked ship. Every minute they thought it would go to pieces. But it didn't—not then. The crew was lost. But the Robinsons, after the storm, got to the near-by island.

Their first shelter was a tent on the beach. But they wound up, after months there, with a summer house in a giant tree, a winter house in a cave that they discovered, and all kinds of interesting and valuable possessions. The boys all had guns, too, and the way they popped off stuff around there—oh, boy! Even bears and buffaloes. And then finally even cannibals came!

“Did you hear me?” the kid pulled at my elbow.

“What was that?” I asked, coming back to earth.

“I said, I'll take you over to Rory's house, if

you want me to. It's just around the corner a block or two. Maybe he can talk to you through the window."

"Gee, that'll be swell. And then I'd like to meet Dee-Dee. For I'm going to try to get myself and my chums in on that trip, if I can. Of course, we can't stay all next week with him, as our school starts next Tuesday. But we can stay till Monday night—by phoning home. I know it'll be all right with *my* parents."

A deep throaty gurgling whistle here came up from the canal.

"That's Dee-Dee now—getting up steam," the kid grew excited. "But you say you want to see Rory first, huh?"

"I don't know," I hesitated. "Maybe I ought to see Dee-Dee first—or he may pick up some other boys ahead of us. I don't want to be left out, if I can help it."

"Well, make up your mind," he shrugged.

Peg came running across here with a couple of bundles.

"Did you hear that whistle, Jerry?" he asked, his eyes dancing. "Well, that was that free-wheeling kid we were talking about. He's fixed up an old steamboat. And this afternoon——"

"—he's going to be shipwrecked on Oak Island," I finished for him. "I know all about it, Peg. I just learned, too, that our old chum Rory Ringer lives here."

Peg scowled at my empty hands.

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"Haven't you bought the 'weenies' and buns yet?" he demanded.

"I'm not so sure that we'll need them now," I told him. "For we won't be leaving till after dinner."

"We will, too!" he swelled up. "For I want to get to the island and see the fun when the kid gets there. He and an aunt of his were down there at daybreak, I was just told, hanging bananas and cocoanuts in the trees, and planting a monkey there, to make it look like a tropical island. My uncle almost laughed himself into stitches telling me about it. The whole town's laughing about it, he said."

"All except the fat man," I put in.

"What fat man?" Peg stared.

"That's something more I found out that you didn't," I laughed. "But, listen, Peg!—you'd rather be *in* the shipwreck, wouldn't you, than just a looker-on?"

"Of course. But——"

"Then just forget about the 'buts,'" I cut him off again. "Dee-Dee Freeling knows all about us. So go on down to the dock and tell him who you are; and tell him you want to be Fritz Robinson."

Peg began looking around on the sidewalk.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

"The brick that fell on your head while I was away."

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"But didn't your uncle tell you where Dee-Dee got his inspiration for the shipwreck?"

"No."

"But you've read *The Swiss Family Robinson*, haven't you?"

"Oh, sure!" Peg's eyes began to light up.

"Well, that's where Dee-Dee got his idea. He had some kids picked out for the Robinson boys—Rory was one of them—but they're all quarantined. So tell him I want to be Jack, and that we have Scoop and Red for Ernest and Francis. Dee-Dee himself is going to be the father, I guess."

"And is he taking along a girl for Mrs. Robinson?" Peg grinned, comprehending everything now and as eager for the fun as I was.

"That's for you to find out. But hurry along now and get things fixed up. I'm off to see Rory for a few minutes. So-long, brother Fritz! See you later," I waved.

"So-long, brother Jack!" he waved in like spirit, his mouth still spread from ear to ear.

Then off toward the canal he went on the run.

CHAPTER IV

DEE-DEE FREELING

I WISHED afterwards that I hadn't bothered to look up Rory, for it just added to his disappointment. Missing the planned shipwreck was bad enough, but missing the added fun of being in it with his old gang was almost too much for him. Of course, there was no certainty yet that we'd be in it. But I made it seem pretty certain in my brief talk with him.

He was supposed to stay in bed upstairs, but had popped out pop-eyed when he heard my whistle below, his mother, though, quickly shooing him back again. Which was the end of that! In all, I don't think we exchanged more than two dozen words through his window. But it was good to see him again, though I wished with all my heart that the reunion had occurred at a more favorable time for him.

"And where do you live?" I asked my young guide, when we were back in the street.

"Over there," he pointed to a new bungalow, very much like Rory's.

"Well, you sure have some pretty little places on this side of the street," I told him, looking around. "It's a pretty street, too—with its big elms."

“That’s where Dee-Dee lives over there,” he further pointed across to a rambling wooden house, with showy porches upstairs and down, and fancy wooden geegaws everywhere. It was set in a wide deep lot, with an ornamental iron fence entirely across the front. This fence, and particularly the large iron gate, seemed to say: “Keep out!” But the pleasant shaded lawn on both sides of the walk inside the gate, and the colorful flowers in an open spot on the south side, seemed to contradict with: “No, don’t stay out—we want you to come in.”

We have several distinctive old houses like that in Tutter—every small town has, I guess. But this one was better kept up than the most that I knew of, showing that there was still plenty of money in the family.

“I figured that was where Dee-Dee lived, from what you told me,” I told the kid. “And who lives in that other old wooden house on that side of the street?—the fat man?”

“Yes. That’s him out in the yard now. See him?”

“Boy, he sure is plenty hefty, all right,” I took a good look, grinning. “He looks as though he was poured into those white summer pants. Dressy, isn’t he?”

“He’s an old crab!” the kid scowled. “We used to ‘coon’ grapes over there, but we don’t dare to now. Boy, I bet he’d break all our bones if he ever caught us in his grapes! But look at

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him!" I was excitedly clutched by the arm. "Do you see what he's doing, Jerry?"

There was a high unkempt hedge between the two houses, and the fat man, after sauntering leisurely around his yard, as though to show off his nice white pants and summer shoes, had tip-toed over to the hedge and now was slyly peeping through.

"Let's go tell Aunt Trudy," the kid started pulling me off.

"Tell her what?"

"That he's spying on her again. For that's her over there in her flower garden."

"But that's a little girl," I told him, after a quick look. "That isn't a woman."

"Well, you come on," he laughed, still pulling on me. "Maybe you'll get a surprise."

And I sure did! For the woman was a delicately-featured dwarf! Even in her sunbonnet, she wasn't much taller than the little kid himself.

But with her old-fashioned spectacles and gray hair, I could readily see that she was sixty, at least.

"Now, Bobbie," she went at him reprov-ingly, when she learned what had brought him on the run, "I don't like the idea of you coming here telling me stories like this. Mr. Terry is my brother-in-law. He married my younger sister. So he has a perfect right to look at me through the hedge, if he wants to."

"But, Aunt Trudy," the kid persisted, evi-

dently knowing her very well and feeling free around her, "he isn't just *looking* at you. He's spying on you. I've seen him do it before, too."

"Tut, tut, Bobbie! You see and hear too much for your own good. But who's this other boy?" she inquired, looking me over with kindly, interested eyes. "Is he some new boy in the block?"

"No," I spoke up for myself, "I'm from Tutter. My name's Jerry Todd."

She puzzled for a moment or two over the name.

"Oh, I know now!" she cried. "You're the boy Rory Ringer is always telling us about."

"Rory and I are old chums," I told her.

"Oh, how *nice!*" her whole face lit up. "Dee-Dee will be *so* pleased! I can't imagine anybody he'd rather meet than you. In fact," her eyes twinkled girlishly, "from what I know about *him*, and from what I've heard about *you*, I think you two are very much of a kind."

I had felt kind of uneasy around her at first—her being a dwarf. I wasn't used to talking with people like that. But after the first minute or two I had forgotten all about it. For she was so nice. It was just like I was talking with some nice girl of my own age.

She had raised up with a handful of blossoms when we came up, and deftly arranging these into a bouquet now, she sent the kid across with it to Rory's house.

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"The neighbors around here talk too much," she frowned. "The idea of Bobbie coming in here and telling me that I'm being spied on! But he's only repeating what he hears at home. I know I'm being spied on. But it isn't pleasant to hear of it from children. Sometimes, too, it frightens me—I'm such a little body, and so weak! But mercy me!" she checked herself. "I wonder whatever possessed me to talk this way to you! You'll think I have no judgment at all."

She led me over to her big front porch then, treating me to lemonade. And all the time, as we sat talking together, we could see that big moonlike face in the hedge. Finally it got on her nerves.

"Oh, I wish he'd quit that!" she cried. "Sometimes I think he's trying to drive me mad."

"Someone ought to turn the hose on him," I growled.

"Dee-Dee did that one day," she smiled faintly in recollection. "But, of course, I never would let him do it again. For we won't gain anything by antagonizing him that way. But I certainly *will not* turn my property over to him, as he's been trying to get me to do," came grimly. "My younger sister had her share, and my dead brother, too, for that matter. What's left is mine to do with as I see fit. If Dee-Dee and I want to spend it, and have a little fun, I think we should have the privilege, without always being criticised and threatened. Certainly I'd a thou-

sand times rather have Dee-Dee get the benefit of my money, than that other impudent young nephew of mine. But here I am, running on again like a silly old goose! What is there about you, Jerry," she laughed, "that makes me want to confide in you this way?"

"Maybe it's because I want to be your friend," I told her earnestly. "I'd like to be Dee-Dee's friend, too, and go with him on that trip this afternoon."

"Jerry," she asked, after a long serious look at me, which made me realize more than ever how pretty she must have been in her youth, "do you believe in the answer to prayer?"

"I most certainly do," I nodded.

"Well, I feel that God Himself sent you here to-day. For if all I've heard about you is true, you must be an exceptionally capable, reliable boy. Dee-Dee is capable, too—sometimes almost too much so! But he isn't always reliable. He's too rattle-headed—too daring. He had his heart set on this shipwreck, which in a way is silly, I know. But he'll never be a boy but once. And he *is* an exceptionally good boy. We are devoted to each other. So I just said to myself, why not let him go ahead and do it?—and forget the influences at work against us. I even thought at first of going along with him, as I like to do such things myself! But I was afraid to go—I was afraid to leave the house alone."

"You mean—you were afraid that your

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brother-in-law would break in and rob you?"

"I wouldn't put it past him, Jerry—particularly if he thought he could get his hands on some of my documents. He's a wicked, evil, scheming man. My sister was deceived in him, and died of a broken heart. Having run through all her money, he came here to get mine away from me, and he is still trying. I've been afraid, too, that something might happen to Dee-Dee on this trip—with all that nonsense around him, and his cousin and uncle feeling so bitter toward him. They'd like to get him out of the way, or defraud him. So last night I asked God for help, Jerry."

"And you think He sent me, huh?" I grinned, peculiarly pleased.

"I do indeed. You just said a moment ago that you wanted to go along with Dee-Dee. Well, I'm going to see that you get the chance. But throughout the fun, Jerry, I want you to keep a watchful eye on him. Will you do that for me?"

"I most certainly will," I promised faithfully. "But you don't really believe, do you," I searched her eyes, "that he's liable to be bumped off."

"Oh, no!—not that! But I wouldn't put it past his uncle to try and separate us somehow, to his advantage. For he knows how devoted I am to Dee-Dee, who has been with me since he was two. He knows, too, how I'm planning to dispose of my property. The only way he *can* come

in himself is through trickery and roguery of some sort."

"Why don't you go to the police with your story?" I made the practical suggestion. "They'll soon settle your brother-in-law's hash if he tries to kidnap Dee-Dee while we're away, or mistreat you. It's your property. And the police will gladly help you protect it if you ask them. The law is all on your side."

"What can I tell the police, Jerry?" came helplessly. "I have no actual proof that either Dee-Dee or I is in danger. It's just my own suspicion."

"But you do know you're being spied on," I pointed out.

"Yes, and if taken to account for that, do you know what my brother-in-law would say? He'd say I was irresponsible, and as a member of the family he was watching me, in a kindly way, to save me from some possible act of my own folly."

"What was that again?" I asked her, puzzled. "I didn't quite understand."

"Well, to be blunt, Jerry, he's trying to create the impression throughout the neighborhood that I'm crazy, and that it's his duty, as the only other adult member of the family, to take over my affairs. I *have* done some queer things, I'll admit, for I've tried to grow up with Dee-Dee like a sister. He's been in all kinds of imaginative things, and, of course, everything he's been in I've been in, too—in a way. All of which now

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is a big help to my scheming brother-in-law, in his effort to accumulate evidence against me. He regards this planned shipwreck of Dee-Dee's, not only as a waste of money, but as further proof of my irresponsibility. So I imagine it's just a matter of time before he takes definite steps against me. Heaven only knows what course his trickery will take, while Dee-Dee's away. But here comes Bobbie back for you. Be careful what you say to him. And remember, too, that I have confided in you as a friend of Dee-Dee's."

The kid had picked up a sling-shot across the street and now was grimly maneuvering to get close enough to the hedge for an effective shot. The little old lady quickly forestalled that, though, when she saw what he was up to.

Then into sight, at the far end of the block, came a larger tow-headed boy leading a goat, with my chums in a grinning string behind, Red leading a squealing pig, Scoop a droopy-eared donkey, and Peg his own yellow cow!

"It's Dee-Dee, Aunt Trudy!" the kid danced. "He's finally got his cow. Look, Aunt Trudy! He's coming with his cow."

The crazy procession, as it wound into the yard through the big gate, brought the fat man fuming clear through the hedge, and after him a boy, the very picture of him, but much smaller.

What the two intended doing there, I don't know—but the man himself, with his livid jowls

and blazing rat-like eyes, looked mad enough to do almost anything. Maybe he was going to berate his indulgent relative for giving her nephew the money for the animals, the thought of the waste being too much for him. But before he could say anything, the goat, slyly released, took after him, putting him to sudden flight.

Boy, it was funny, after what I knew, to see the goat land amidships in the seat of those nice white pants! And while you wouldn't think it, considering the man's enormous size, that goat, let me tell you, actually lifted him right off the ground. Or maybe, at the instant of the impact, he gave an agonized leap. Anyway, he flew through the air (with the greatest of ease!), and right through the hedge coming down in a raging heap on the other side.

But even better, I thought, was the way the fat kid got it. He had come up with an insolent overbearing look—but this changed in a flash to one of terror when he saw the goat coming for him. Boy, did he ever jump those over-stuffed legs of his to get back on the safe side of the hedge! But the goat was faster. And then, just as with his father, he got a regular old pile-driver smack at just the right instant—and through the hedge *he* sailed, to similarly land in a heap.

Aunt Trudy, who had been watching horrified, sank weakly into a chair.

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"Oh!" she cried, clutching her heart. "Oh! How dreadful!"

Then, as the pig got away, and took off through one of her pet flower beds, she took after it, screaming and waving her arms.

Weak from laughter, Peg threw his arms around the cow's neck when I came up, and gently kissed it.

"She's mine at last, Jerry!" he romantically rolled his eyes. "The gulf that separated us is no more."

"And look what I've got," Scoop showed off his donkey, grinning. "His name is Toby. He can sing, too. Come on, Toby! Let's have a little tune."

"Hee-haw! Hee-haw!" sleepily obliged the donkey.

"I had a pig," Red put in. "But I laughed so hard she got away from me."

"And can *she* sing, too?" I asked.

"No, but would she ever make a swell football charger—the way she pulls you around. Dee-Dee tried to rent two, but this one's all he could get. She's a great plenty, though."

The tow-head himself came up grinning then.

"Put 'er there, Jerry!" he thrust out his hand, a clean-cut, merry-eyed, likeable boy. "I'm Dee-Dee Freeling. I bet you never had any better fun than that over home, huh? Or maybe you don't have a fat uncle and cousin who hate the

very ground you walk on. That was dear Uncle Port who went through the hedge first. And that was dear Cousin Junior who took off second. But, come on, Jerry!" he took a firmer grip on my hand. "Give me a real hand shake. You haven't any life at all. What's the matter with you?"

"All right," I grinned, grimly gripping back. "I'll give you all you want."

"That's more like it," he laughed.

The fat man had his disheveled head back in the hedge.

"You'll pay for this," he bellowed at Dee-Dee. "And so will you, Gertrude Freeling," he told the little old lady, as she came up with the squealing pig. "Anybody can see that you're an idiot—the things that go on over here. Just look at you now!—pulling a pig around!"

"Well, you can take the pig's place if you want to," offered Dee-Dee. "We can get a longer rope—to go around you. But you better wipe that dirt off your nose first."

"You insufferable little brat! You purposely turned that goat loose."

"Why, Uncle Port!" Dee-Dee drew his face down. "How can you think such a thing of me!"

"How *did* the goat happen to take after him?" I got around and asked Peg.

"Oh, we've been practicing down on the canal bank, with a big straw dummy. Dee-Dee

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thought maybe we'd get a chance like this. And the man who rented him the goat gave a good report on it."

"How much other stuff has he rented?" I asked.

"Just the one monkey—though he tried to get two. And so far he hasn't been able to get a parrot or kangaroo, at all."

"Where in heck would he get a kangaroo?"

"Well, he put it in the ad—hoping. He got the chickens and ducks, though. They're crated up on the boat."

There was more booming and fist shaking from the hedge.

"I'm going to swear out a writ to-day, Gertrude Freeling, and have you remanded to an asylum, where you belong," came the added threat. "The idea of you renting donkeys and pigs, and furthering your nephew in his witless wasteful schemes! But it's all going to be stopped. I'm going to stop it. I'm going to stop that steamboat, too. I'll see that it never leaves the dock. I'll phone the Governor to block the canal."

"How about the President?" pleasantly suggested Dee-Dee. "Why don't you phone him, to block your own big mouth?"

The fat kid's face came through then.

"Yah, yah, yah!" he hatefully mugged at Dee-Dee.

“Oh, look, fellows!” Dee-Dee danced. “We’ve got another animal to take with us. There’s a skunk over there in the hedge.”

Bobbie still had his sling-shot.

“Watch me plunk it,” he quickly let fly.

But instead of the kid—my gosh, what do you know if he didn’t smack the old man himself right on his bald head! Then, let me tell you, there *was* some tall old raving around there, with the distracted little old lady trying desperately to make peace, but to no avail.

“Oh, dear!” she wailed, when the fat man had taken himself off, presumably for some cracked ice for his knobbed head. “Now we *are* in trouble! Oh, Dee-Dee—Dee-Dee! Why did you *ever* bring those animals here?”

“So you could see them,” he lightly told her, flying up to her and throwing his arms reassuringly around her. “And there’s nothing to be scared of, Aunt Trudy. So don’t look that way. Shucks, he’s just a big bluff. Going to phone the Governor! That *would* give the Governor a laugh. And talking about getting out a writ! I was just down talking with our lawyer, Aunt Trudy, for I wanted to know what he thought, before I left. And he says for you to forget the whole thing, and not worry an instant. Uncle Port, he says, can’t do a thing. But for fear he or Junior may do something to my steamboat, I tell you what *I’m* going to do: I’m going to start

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right now. For I've got everything on board except the animals here. And I can soon hurry them back."

Aunt Trudy was beaming now, her worries forgotten and only the fun that he was going to have on her mind.

"How much did you have to pay for your cow, Dee-Dee?" she asked.

"Five dollars, for the week."

"Well, you want to be kind to your animals," she gently enjoined, "and not mistreat them in any way in your fun."

"You know I wouldn't, Aunt Trudy," he promised manfully.

"How about the kegs?" she further inquired, evidently familiar with all the details.

"They're all aboard."

"And the tubs for the raft?"

"Everything, Aunt Trudy. Two hams, a crate of eggs, a dozen cans of baked beans, canned soup, and all kinds of things. I've got steam up, too. Remember now what I told you. Or if you do get worried while I'm gone, go down and see the lawyer. And now, one more hug, and I'm off."

"Oh, Dee-Dee dear!" she clung to him. "How I hope and pray that nothing ever comes between us."

"Nothing ever will, Aunt Trudy," he promised, sober now. "We're perfectly safe from

Uncle Port—the lawyer told me so. And when I grow up I'm going to marry you."

"Why, Dee-Dee!" she cried, shocked.

"Well," he laughed, "maybe I won't marry you. But you're always going to be my best girl. I'm going to put in all my time thinking up nice things to do for you. But it's time to go. For I want to get away from here before they do. Come on with the menagerie, fellows."

"But, Dee-Dee!—just a minute! Wouldn't you like to take Jerry along, too?"

"These are all his chums, Aunt Trudy. And that's all arranged. I thought you understood."

Her eyes met mine as we started off.

"Good-by, Jerry!" she called.

But what she really meant was—keep your eyes on him, Jerry.

And having given her my promise, that's exactly what I intended doing—though I hadn't much fear of any trouble after Dee-Dee's easy reassurances.

But I didn't know that fat man! Gee!

CHAPTER V

HEADED FOR THE ISLAND

"HAS ANYBODY phoned home yet?" I asked Peg, when we were back in the business section again, with the same scattering of morning shoppers along the sidewalk and a growing flock of kids at our heels.

"Not me," he shrugged, hurrying along with his cow.

Scoop was just ahead with the donkey.

"How about you?" I called to him. "Have you phoned home yet, Scoop?"

"Nope," he called back. "Nor Red, either."

"Then let's stop now," I suggested, slowing up.

But Dee-Dee, at the head again, quickly opposed that.

"No," he shook his head, looking anxiously back. "Let's hurry on to the boat and get loaded up. It's important."

I caught up with him.

"Do you really think your uncle will try and stop you?" I asked him.

"He'd like to, Jerry, if for no other reason than pure spite," came earnestly.

"But the canal's state property, the same as the

highways," I told him. "I don't see how he could stop you, even if he tried."

He looked cautiously around.

"My boat's been condemned, Jerry," he intimately dropped his voice beyond hearing of the kids around us. "And the law, I think, says you *can* hold up a boat like that—if he's smart enough to think of it. But if we can just get away from him this morning, and get to the wide-waters, we should worry what follows. Let him completely blow up then, if he wants to."

Peg came up pulling his cow.

"Why don't *you* phone home, Jerry?" he suggested. "You aren't doing anything."

"Listen, brother!" I pushed out my chest. "Who's the main attraction in this parade, anyway? Who's all the people looking at up and down the street? Besides, I want to help you fellows load up. I'm crazy to see that old steamboat, too."

"The steamboat'll still be there when you get through. Go on," he urged, beginning to scowl as he always does when crossed. "You can be more help phoning than helping us. We can load up all right—and run the parade, too, for that matter. You can phone from my uncle's store, if you want to."

"And charge the calls to him?" I grinned.

"Don't be dumb! Use the dollar I gave you. If there's anything left, buy gumdrops with it."

I had been thinking all the way down that we

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ought to pool our money and help Dee-Dee out with something, not wanting to be cheap about it.

But when I suggested it to him, he laughed me off.

"No, Jerry," he shook his head, "you don't need to buy a thing. I've stocked up with everything we could possibly need."

"But it doesn't seem right," I persisted, "to have you pay for everything."

"Why shouldn't I? It was my idea. I would have paid for everything no matter who went with me. But, Jerry, if you're going to pay for your calls, why don't you go to the phone office? That's it over there," he pointed to a one-story brick building.

"Yes—go on," urged Peg.

"Oh, all right," I grudgingly gave in, stomping off.

A two-minute call to Tutter, I was told inside, would cost twenty cents, and I could pay the operator, when the call was completed, or drop the coins into the pay-phone in the public booth, just as I preferred. If I talked longer than two minutes, I'd simply have to drop in more coins, it was further explained. But unless it was Red's mother, whose tongue has a double hinge, I figured I ought to complete each call in a minute, as I had only to explain that a boy friend of Rory Ringer's wanted us all to go camping with him till school started—and would it be all right?

However, I had my whole dollar changed into dimes, just in case, and shut myself into the nearest booth. There were two of these available, with just a light wooden partition between them, and hardly had I started talking to Mother when a fearful creaking came from the other booth, as someone wedged in there.

"Then you'll surely be home next Monday night?" Mother pinned me down on that.

"Absolutely," I promised.

"Well . . . I guess it'll be all right," she finally consented. "Be a good boy."

It was difficult to hear her, with the partition still creaking and the other phone jingling as the necessary coins were dropped in. So I decided to wait, with my second call, till the other party was through.

"Hello!" came gruffly through the partition. "Is that you, Charley?"

Gee-miny crickets! It was the fat man himself! No wonder the partition was creaking. Even more wonder was that he ever had gotten into the tiny booth at all.

"What's that?" he rumbled again. "Isn't this the Lockwood Sanitarium? Well, I want to talk with Dr. Lockwood himself . . . When? . . . Well, ask him to ring me when he comes in . . . Yes, that's the number. Tell him it's the same party who was over to see him last night. He'll understand. Good-by."

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And I could actually see the suffering partition settle back to its original shape as he wedged out.

As I had feared, Red's mother had to know all the if's, and's and wherefore's—if we had had any thought of camping over there, why in the name of common sense hadn't Donald told her something about it before he left?—and how could she buy him a new school suit if he wasn't there to try it on? Oh, dear! It was just one thing after another—and she just *knew* that Donald wouldn't touch soap or a tooth-brush till she got him home to make him again. But finally I got her to say yes, and after her Scoop's and Peg's mothers, after which I got the ordered gumdrops and lit out for the dock as fast as I could go.

The only dock I knew anything about around there was the one where we had tied up our rowboat. So naturally I went there. But there was no steamboat when I got there, nor rowboat, either, for that matter. What the dickens! Had they gone off without me? I thought so, for an angry moment or two. Still, I peered, there was no sign of them down the canal—and they couldn't have gotten out of sight that quick.

Then a sudden short gurgling blast from the other direction sent me wheeling around that way. And there it was, just pulling away from another dock—the craziest old tub of a steamboat that I ever had seen. From where I stood it

appeared to be almost as wide as it was long, with the old-fashioned engine and upright boiler in a covered pit in the middle, and a deck at each end. Dee-Dee, on the front deck, was steering with an old broken pilot wheel, the others, I guess, having taken over the engine and boiler below. For I could hear Red's big mouth down there as the old wreck got closer—yelling to Peg to shovel in more coal, or something. But from the way the smoke was pouring from the rusted funnel, and the way the steam was escaping around the whistle and the whole thing shaking under its power, it looked to me as though they had shoveled in twice as much coal as was wise already.

Had I gone to the other dock I would have missed them then, as Dee-Dee and the others (as I was to learn) had just gotten away from the fat man there. He had come down with a policeman right after his phone call. But luck was with me! And jumping aboard, when the others swung in for me, I shared their wild excitement as the old patched-up rotten-roofed boat kept on down the canal, the engine pounding away and the escaping steam at times completely hiding the penned animals on the back deck.

Peg came out of the engine pit as black as the ace of spades.

“We had our fingers crossed, Jerry,” he told me, his eyes shining through his grime. “We were hoping you'd go to that dock, so that we

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could pick you up on the way by. For we just had to make a run from that fat guy at the other dock, you know. And was *he* mad when he saw us getting away! 'Why don't you stop 'em?' he bellowed at the policeman—with the kids there all laughing their heads off at him, and Dee-Dee, popeyed with excitement, yelling to us to run the steam up higher and keep it up."

"What did the policeman say?" I asked, looking back, and half expecting to see a speed-boat put out after us.

"Nothing. For it's Dee-Dee who has the friends in that town—not old fatty."

"But what if you had missed me?" I asked him, a bit stiffly.

"Oh, we would have waited for you down the canal," he dismissed that with an indifferent wave. "Don't be silly."

Calling Scoop to take over the wheel, Dee-Dee weaved back to us and pretended to take something down from a hook.

"You better put on your sou'westers, men," he tried to make his voice sound like an old salt's. "I'm putting on mine. For we're running into heavy seas. It'll be a fight to keep afloat. The elements are conspiring against us."

So the storm was on, huh? I had been looking forward to this moment, wondering just what he would say and do. But he sure was getting a good start. He was every bit as good with his pretending stuff as I had been told.

"Aye, aye, sir," saluted Peg, going through the same crazy motions.

"What's the matter with you two guys?" I asked him. "Have you got the itch?"

"We're putting on our sou'westers," he told me. "You better put yours on, too."

"I don't even know what it is," I grinned.

"I don't either," he whispered behind Dee-Dee's back. "But I think it's a hat. Anyway, I took a chance on it."

Dee-Dee weaved off toward the front deck again.

"All hands on deck!" he boomed. "Man the mizzenmast! Stow the belaying pins! Weigh the anchor! Man the pumps!"

I scratched my head.

"Boy!" I told Peg, whose own mouth was stretched from ear to ear, showing the fun he was getting out of it himself. "I'm beginning to wonder if I wouldn't have been safer back there on the dock, with old haystack-on-the-stomach."

"Oh, it's all in fun," he laughed. "Go ahead and do as he tells you."

So I took down my own sou'wester and put it on—feeling like a goose doing it. But that was just the beginning. Every minute (according to Dee-Dee) the storm grew worse, till finally, our main mast shattered, we were wallowing helplessly in fifty-foot seas, with the barometer still dropping, and little chance of our surviving.

In reality, we were chugging along all the

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time just as pretty as you please, in one of the shadiest and most peaceful stretches of the whole canal, with not the least sign of a wave ahead of us (though we left plenty behind), and overhead, above the trees, one of the most perfect solid-blue late-summer skies that I had ever seen.

"How do you like it, Jerry?" Peg asked me, still grinning widely, as we continued to chug along, Red down below watching the steam gauge and spiritedly pulling on the whistle cord whenever the pressure got up to what he thought was the danger point.

"It's a lot of fun," I replied. "But I feel kind of silly talking about a storm, with everything so perfect around us."

"Have you noticed Dee-Dee's eyes when he's going it?" laughed Peg. "You'd never think from them that he was pretending. He looks in dead earnest."

"He's certainly the oddest kid I ever knew," I watched him up front, braced against the wind with pretended binoculars in his hands.

"Yes," came quickly, "but you like him, don't you?"

"Oh, sure! He's swell. But still I feel kind of uneasy around him. I never was around a boy before who could let himself go so completely. He ought to be in the movies—with his acting."

"And we were going to fight him when he landed!" laughed Peg. "We certainly had him

all wrong. But, tell me, Jerry!—what'd my ma say? Did she hesitate any about letting me stay?"

"A little," I told him. "Red's ma talked the most. But finally they all consented. We have to be home Monday night, though—I had to firmly promise that."

"Oh, boy!" Peg's eyes sparkled more than ever. "Five whole days here! Are we ever the lucky guys!"

"Is it five days?" I doubtfully began counting in my mind.

"Sure thing. To-day's Friday—and Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Oh, rats! That's only four days, isn't it? But that's all right," his short scowl lifted. "We'll make it seem like five."

"But what are we going to do when we get to the island?" my curiosity took me ahead.

"Get wrecked on a rock, of course—the same as the Robinsons."

"But there aren't any rocks around there, except on the island itself."

"Well," quietly laughed Peg, "I dare say, when the time comes, that Dee-Dee'll successfully convince us all that we're hung up on a rock. Anyway, I'm going to be very easily convinced myself. In fact," he peered ahead, "I can almost see the rock already."

"We *are* getting close to the wide-waters," I noted certain landmarks.

"Sure thing. And I can see the rock plainly

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now. There it is," he excitedly pointed through the trees.

"You're getting almost as good at pretending as Dee-Dee himself," I laughed. "But, tell me! Did you say this is his second trip up here today?"

Peg laughed.

"Yes. He and his aunt came up at daybreak with the organ-man's monkey and some bananas and cocoanuts. They hung the stuff in the trees—to make it look like a tropical island."

"What did they do with the monkey?"

"Oh, just turned it loose, I guess. It's probably hopping around up there now, eating the bananas. And do you remember the shark in the book, Jerry?"

"Don't tell me," I stared, "that he's got a shark loose up here, too!"

"A live shark was out of the question. But he simply had to have a shark, you know. It's all in the book. So he anchored a log off the island, with eyes and teeth painted on it. Boy, is this ever going to be a crazy adventure! A monkey ahead and a whole menagerie aboard! It's going to be a regular cuckoo camp."

"There's the wide-waters now!" I cried, as the wide stretch of water came into plain sight. "And now for the shipwreck, huh?"

"Yep," nodded Peg, "the big moment has come."

CHAPTER VI

PREPARING TO LAND

OUR ENGINE, and particularly our frog-like whistle, had an entirely different sound in the wide-waters—more of a deep echoing sound. Maybe this was caused by the sudden widening out of the canal; or maybe the dense forest that came down to the water's edge on all sides caused it.

Illinois has few wild spots left like this, with giant native trees and obscuring underbrush. The place always gave me the feeling that the other world I knew was far, far away. And yet I knew, too, that the thriving little county seat of Ashton was but a few miles in one direction and the sleepy little village of Steam Corners an even shorter distance in the other. But, as I say, it *seemed* as though the rest of the world was far off. And to-day I had that feeling more than ever.

Boy, it was pretty here! I never had seen the wide-waters stiller and the little island itself greener and sunnier. To get to the island we had to swing off to the right, as the channel, marked off with white-painted piles, passed straight through from east to west, on the extreme south (the towpath) side. It was one of the most

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treacherous spots in the canal's whole course, as the swamp's oozy bottom kept working in, requiring repeated channel dredging. This dredging (and dumping) had run up the mud on the island side of the channel till the water in places there was but a foot or two deep. So, with a boat like ours, it took great skill to turn off and get through. The wiser pilots never tried it, and the few who 'did very often found themselves stuck in the mud.

Dee-Dee weaved back, when we were well into the wide-waters, clutching his imaginary sou'wester.

"We're in the merciless grip of a typhoon," he boomed above the pretended gale. "It's relentlessly driving us ashore. Hark!" he cupped his right ear. "Those are the breakers we hear."

All I could hear myself was the old engine still pounding along. But I pretended to look off toward the pretty little island as though only certain disaster awaited us there.

"What coast is it, sir?" Peg boomed in pattern, peering ashore.

"I can't tell yet," Dee-Dee studied the shoreline through his binoculars. "It's too far off."

"Maybe it's an island," I put in meekly. And then, realizing my blunder, I raised my voice. "*Maybe it's an island,*" I boomed.

Peg almost swallowed his tonsils.

"At-a-boy," he gave me a sly encouraging nudge.

"I CAN SEE PALM TREES," I gave him a still better sample.

"Yes," moderately boomed Dee-Dee, with his binoculars still up, "I can see foliage myself. It's a wooded island, all right. But I doubt if we ever get to it alive—through those breakers."

Red popped his head up here.

"What do you want me to do now?" he asked Dee-Dee, from the engine pit. "Pile in more coal, and blow 'er clear over the whole island?—or just raise 'er up a hundred feet?"

"For Pete's sake *no!*" I yelled at him, my eyes, I guess, almost popping out of my head.

For he was crazy enough to do it!

He climbed clear out.

"What was all the yelling about a minute ago?" he quizzed.

"The storm," Peg boomed at him.

"Huh?" he fell back, staring.

"The storm," I similarly boomed.

"Boy!" he blinked. "Someone's got ashes in their gear-box around here, and it isn't the old engine, either."

Peg clutched him.

"Look out! The wind'll blow you overboard."

"We've lost our mast," I boomed.

"And our rudder," Peg boomed.

"And your brains," Red then boomed himself, with one of his crazy laughs.

Then, as a new hiss came up from below, he flew down again.

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"There's a hole in the boiler," he yelled through the steam to Dee-Dee.

Dee-Dee jumped for the wheel, turning the boat sharply to the right, between two of the piles.

We were headed directly in toward the island now, but like so many others ahead of us we hadn't gone far before we stuck.

"We're on a rock!" boomed Dee-Dee, from the wheel.

Red climbed up through the steam.

"We're stuck in the mud!" he cried, after a look overboard.

Peg gave him a shove.

"Will you shut up!—you thick-head! We aren't either stuck in the mud. For whoever heard of anybody getting stuck in the mud clear out in the middle of the ocean? Didn't you just hear the captain? We're on a rock."

Red started flourishing and dancing.

"All right," he yelled at the top of his voice. "If you're all going crazy, I might just as well be in it, too. Whoopee! Watch me lay an egg. Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Dee-Dee fought his way back against the wind.

"Lower the lifeboat!" he ordered.

"Aye, aye, sir," Peg jumped to where the boat would have been kept if we had had one, pretending to lower it.

Then, concluding the pantomime, he saluted.

"The boat's all ready, sir," he informed.

(And don't get the mistaken idea, either, that what I'm talking about now was our own row-boat. It was an imaginary boat, like the storm. Our own boat had been left somewhere back in Steam Corners—or at least that was what I thought then, though I was to learn differently later on.)

"Climb in," the gruff order to Peg followed.

He pretended to step in, then out again.

"But, sir," he gravely saluted, "shouldn't we first take the Swiss pastor and his family, in their cabin below? Isn't it customary to take the women and children first?"

"The ship never would hold together till we got 'em up here," came the heartless booming decision. "So why waste our lives trying to save theirs? If we leave now, we stand a slim chance. Into the boat, men—all of you."

"Aye, aye, sir," Peg obediently stepped back in.

"Aye, aye, sir," Scoop and I stepped in next, to keep the fun going.

Then Red gingerly got in.

"I can be just as crazy as the rest of you," he muttered.

Dee-Dee came last.

"Well," he laughed, himself again, "I guess that nicely disposes of the crew. Now, we'll have to be the Robinsons. Remember, I'm the

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father. And, Peg, you're Fritz, my oldest son."

"Aye, aye, sir—I mean, yes, father," Peg grinned.

"Scoop, you're Ernest, my studious second son. Jerry, you're Jack, my daring third son. And, Red, you're Francis, my fourth son."

"And where's my mamma?" Red asked crazily.

Dee-Dee, even prepared for this, promptly pulled a clothed dressmaking dummy out from under a canvas.

"Children," he grinned, standing it on its wire feet, "meet your mother."

Red threw his arms around it.

"Oh, mamma darling! Gimme a nickle for an ice-cream cone."

(And this next part is just like it was in the book, with the father long-windedly passing out compliments and criticisms, and the sons piping up in turn—only, of course, there was no nonsense in *their* book.)

Father: "And now, my dear children, let us consider some means of getting ashore. For the storm, I see, has abated. And off there on the horizon I can faintly detect land."

Francis: "Let's wade ashore, papa? And I'll carry mamma dear on my back."

Fritz: (to Francis) "You big dumb-bell! Don't spoil it. Play up to Dee-Dee like we do. It's fun."

Ernest: "But where are the sailors, papa?"

Father: "They've deserted us, my son, taking the only lifeboat. I fear they were lost in the breakers."

Ernest: "And did they take my natural-history books, too? Oh, dear! Sniff! Sniff! I hope they didn't. For when we get to the island I'm supposed to walk around and study my books. We won't be able to tell what the trees and bushes are, without my books."

Father: "I'm quite sure, my son, that your books are safely packed with our other supplies. And your zeal for learning is most commendable. But this is no time to talk of books. The ship is liable to go to pieces on this rock at any minute. So it behooves us to find some immediate and safe way of getting ashore. Son Fritz, as the oldest of your brothers and the most seasoned in your judgment, have you a suggestion?"

Fritz: "Couldn't we build a raft, father?"

Father: "An open raft would be very dangerous, my son."

Fritz: "Oh, father! I have an idea! Let's float to shore on those barrels over there."

Francis: "Or get a bunghole stretcher and climb in 'em."

Father: "Well spoken, my manly little son! As is so often the case in life, the youngest and least mature in judgment offers the most valued suggestion. We *will* float to shore in the barrels

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—but not in their present form. Come, Fritz! Come, Jack! Come, Ernest! Find me a saw. We'll make tubs of these barrels and float to shore in them that way."

Fritz: "But, father!—what if we get separated? Suppose, for instance, that the tub containing my dear mamma should be blown out to sea?"

Francis: "Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo! I want my mamma!"

Fritz: (to Francis) "Oh, shut up!—you half-baked animal cracker! You'll spoil it all if you keep talking that way. Be a pal!"

Father: "Fritz, my son, your point is well taken. We must devise some practical means of keeping the tubs together. Eureka! I have it! We'll nail the tubs together in a row."

Francis: "And will there be a little tub for me, papa?"

Fritz: (to Francis) "Yes—with a club in it—if you don't do as I say."

Father: "My sons! What amazing good fortune! I find that all the larger barrels already have been sawed in half."

Francis: "Shut my mouth! Are *you* surprised!"

Father: "Let me count them. One, two, three, four, five, six—that's one for each of us."

Francis: "Here's another one, papa—for the cow. *Ouch!*"

Father: "What prompted that outburst of pain?"

Fritz: "Oh, I just happened to have my foot stuck out, father, and our dear little Francis backed into it."

Father: "How many tubs have we in all?"

Ernest: "Eight, papa. I count fast, don't I?"

Father: "It is your just reward, my son, for your diligent application to your books. But help me turn the tubs upside-down, in a row."

Ernest: "But why are you doing that, papa?"

Father: "You'll learn presently. Now, Fritz, help me with this long plank. We'll place it lengthwise on the tubs. So! Now let us see if we can find some nails."

Francis: "I bet you ten to one you do, papa."

Ernest: "I have some, papa!—and a hammer, too. They were lying here together."

Father: "How fortunate. Providence plainly is aiding us in our desperate attempt to save our lives. And while I'm nailing the plank to the bottom of the tubs, suppose you boys take those kegs over there and try tying one to each side of our cow. If successful, do likewise with the donkey."

Fritz: "Oh, father! How smart you are! I was wondering myself if there wasn't some way of saving our dumb animals."

Francis: "Boy, they aren't the only thing that's dumb around here!"

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Fritz: "It almost brought me to tears, father, to think of leaving our dear animals here to perish miserably in the sea when the ship broke up. But now I see what your plan is. The kegs will serve as floats and buoy up our animals till they reach shore."

Father: "That is the plan exactly, my son. So apply yourself to the appointed task without further delay. Release the ducks, too, and let them swim ashore. The chickens, we'll try and take with us in our tubs. Now, let's to work—all of us."

Francis: "But when are we going to eat? Good-night-nurse! Look at the sun up there! And we could all wade to shore in two minutes, the animals included. For it isn't more than two feet deep here."

But the Robinsons hadn't landed that way! And according to Dee-Dee's plans, everything had to be done as nearly like the Robinsons as possible.

But Peg (as Fritz) ran into difficulties when he tried to keg the pig. For that cranky old pig didn't intend to be keged, let me tell you. Breaking away, she plunged overboard herself, and after a short swim wallowed to shore through the mud, quickly disappearing inland.

Francis: "Haw, haw, haw! Is this ever funny!"

Father: "What are you laughing at, my little son?"

Fritz: "He just saw himself in the mirror, father."

Francis: (to Fritz) "You and your crazy kegs! But just wait till you get the cow and donkey in the water. They'll have to lay on their backs to even get the kegs wet—it's so shallow here."

Father: "Well, my children, my task is completed. See!—I have all eight tubs securely fastened together. Altogether they make a very serviceable and practical craft—and one, I hope, that will get us safely to the land that we see in the distance. What will befall us when we land there, I know not. But even if it is a desert isle, we will make the best of it, thankful to be there together. Help me launch my craft, now. That's it! She floats beautifully."

Fritz: "Which is the front end, father?"

Father: "The ends are both alike."

Francis: "Then we won't know whether we're backing up or going ahead."

Father: "Let us load up now. Ha, my dear wife! Let me take you in my arms and gently place you in the first tub. There you are, my dear! And put this canvas over your lap. We may need it when we get to shore. Now, Francis, you take the second tub."

Francis: "Is this necessary?"

Fritz: (to Francis) "You will—or else."

Francis: "O-k."

Father: "Fritz, you're next."

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Francis: "Say! Is that big ape going to ride right behind me?"

Fritz: (to Francis) "Yes, and if you don't pipe down, you undersized dried-up turnip, you'll get an oar on the top of your head."

Francis: "I want to ride with my dear mamma! I don't like it here."

Father: "Stay where you are. Are you in, Fritz?"

Fritz: "Yes, father."

Father: "By the way—have the ducks been released, as I ordered?"

Fritz: "Yes, father. I released them some time ago. They're probably all on shore now."

Father: "We'll put the chickens in the fourth tub. You can hand them to me, Jack. And, Ernest, you can pack those supplies in the fifth tub—not overlooking that harpoon there. We may need that before we get to shore."

Jack: "Here is a rooster, father. Do you want him first?"

Father: "Yes, let me have him. There! I hope he doesn't fly away."

Francis: "Oh-oh! You didn't hope soon enough, pop. You should have clipped his wings."

Father: "Did he fly away?"

Francis: "Well, it didn't look to me like the cow going over."

Jack: "Here are two hens, father. I tied their feet together."

Father: "Splendid thinking, my son! And how many more are there?"

Jack: "Three, I think."

Father: "Let me have them quickly."

Jack: "Here they are, father."

Father: "How are you coming with your task, Ernest?"

Ernest: "I just finished, papa."

Jack: "And shall I get in the sixth tub, father?"

Father: "Yes. And, Ernest, you take the seventh. Now, I'll get in the last tub myself, and we're off."

Francis: "Boy, I'll say we are—in the head!"

Fritz: "But, father! Stop! How about our animals? They're still aboard."

Francis: "Oh, boy! Now comes the real fun!"

Father: "Yes, let us go back. Fritz, you come and help me. We'll take the goat first. Are you ready?"

Fritz: "Yes, father."

Father: "Then lead him to the edge and gently nudge him in."

Francis: "Yes, and if the poor sucker wasn't weighted down with that keg, I bet a cookie he'd nudge you guys in, instead. Why don't you give him a chance?"

Father: "There he goes!"

Francis: "Yes, right down into the mud. I told you so!"

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Father: "Now, we'll take the cow."

Fritz: "She doesn't want to move, father."

Francis: "Boy, she's smart. No mud for her, if she can help it."

Father: "There! Now, in with her."

Francis: "Oh-oh! Hardly up to her knees. And look at the kegs hanging up there! Haw, haw, haw! I'd like to have a picture of this."

Fritz: "Here comes the donkey, father."

Father: "That's it! Lead him over. Now! And over *he* goes."

Francis: "Boy, they may need those kegs yet—the way they're sinking in the mud."

Father: "Now, back to our places, Fritz."

Fritz: "I'm in, father. Are you?"

Father: "Yes. And this time we *are* off."

Francis: "And *how!*"

CHAPTER VII

FIVE CASTAWAYS

SWIMMING AND floundering along, handicapped by his keg but grimly determined not to be stopped by it, the goat got finally to shore and quickly disappeared there, keg and all.

But the cow and donkey still stood where they had been pushed in.

Bossy Bell herself apparently was inclined to take the whole affair meekly, though she showed plainly enough by the way she squinted around at her kegs that things back there, and underfoot, were not exactly to her liking. But old Toby, obviously less patient and submissive, was fast getting his dander up, as his beady little eyes and expressive twitching ears showed.

Hang heavy kegs on him, huh?

Shove him off into the mud, huh?

And then go off and leave him, huh?

Gr-r-r! He'd see about that. He wouldn't stand there and take it, like an old sissy of a cow. And freeing himself with a determined lunge, he grimly took after us, first one end flying up, with the mud and water flying, and then the other.

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All I could think of, as he bore down on us, was a crazy four-legged seesaw!

Red got a gob of his mud right in the face. And, boy, was he mad!

"Give me that harpoon!" he stood up, bellowing and spitting. "Give it to me, Jerry. I'll fix him."

"Sit down," I yelled to him, leaning first to one side and then to the other to keep the tippy craft balanced. "Sit down, you crazy egg, or you'll tip us all out."

Having had his revenge, old Toby floundered on to shore, and after a triumphant hee-haw back at us, disappeared after the goat and pig inland.

Scoop looked back at the cow.

"Old Bossy Bell seems to like it out there in the mud," he laughed. "She hasn't moved a foot since you fellows shoved her in."

"Maybe you'll have to milk her out there, Peg," I told him.

"You just leave her to me," he wagged wisely. "Bossy Bell and I are just like that," he held up two crossed fingers. "She'll come to shore when I get there."

Red was still wiping and spitting.

"That crazy old jassack! He plastered me right in the mouth, too! Oof!"

"Take a hint then, and keep your mouth shut once a year," Peg told him.

Dee-Dee was pushing in back with a pole.

"I suppose," he said, "we should have rigged

up a sail. For that's the way the Robinsons did it. But I'm afraid we wouldn't have come in very fast with a sail to-day."

Peg held up a handkerchief.

"Who says we haven't got a sail!" he laughed. "Boy, look at the wind fill her out! And look at us scud along!"

The ducks came squawking to meet us, evidently wanting to land, to find out what the place was like, but afraid to till we came up.

"Did you bring feed for them?" I asked Dee-Dee.

"Oh, sure! And for the chickens, too. But they'll pick up the most of their living themselves. I'll just toss out a little grain at night to keep them around us, like the Robinsons did."

"I remember that," I told him. "And how they roosted on the tent ridge. But what are you going to do when your week is up? You may have some fun catching them alone—and getting the donkey and that pig back to town."

"I've just been thinking about that, Jerry," came gravely. "And I've half decided to pull out when you fellows do. For it won't be much fun here alone."

"Gee, I wish I could stay the whole week," I told him.

"And, boy, do I!" longingly put in Peg. "For this is the best fun I've ever had."

"Hey! Look out!" Red yelled from up front. "You're steering right for a log."

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"Oh-oh!" Dee-Dee dug his pole in. "I bet it's my shark."

"It's got paint daubed all over it," craned Red.

"That's its eyes and teeth, you lame-brain!" growled Peg.

"But what's it for?" puzzled Red.

"Didn't you ever read *The Swiss Family Robinson*?" I asked him.

"No. But I read *Peter Rabbit*," he tittered.

"Yes, you would!" ridiculed Peg. "That's just about your speed."

"In the book," I explained to Red, "the oldest Robinson boy harpoons the shark on the way in."

"You mean Peg?" he jeered. "Say, he couldn't harpoon the broad side of a barn."

"Is that so!" stiffened Peg. "Hand me the harpoon, Jerry, and I'll show him! I'll harpoon that old shark if I have to dive overboard and drive the harpoon into him with a hammer."

"Oh," laughed Dee-Dee, "you needn't do that. We can pretend some more. But let's start talking again like the Robinsons. We should first say something about the island. And then we can suddenly discover that the shark is after us—just like in the book. You start, Peg."

Fritz: "I have been watching the shoreline, father, for some sign of the sailors."

Father: "I doubt if we ever see them again, my son. As I told your brother Ernest, I fear they were all lost in the breakers."

Fritz: "Do you think it's a cannibal island, father?"

Father: "Oh, perish the thought, my son!"

Fritz: "Yes, it would be terrible, wouldn't it, father, if the cannibals caught our dear little brother Francis and parboiled him!"

Francis: "Phooey on you, brother!"

Fritz: "It looks awfully rocky ahead, father. Do you think we'll be able to land?"

Father: "There appears to be a rift in the rocks to the right, as though a small river might empty into the sea there."

Fritz: "That ought to make a swell landing place, father. It looks like a swell little island, too."

Francis: "Well, you ought to know—you've been here often enough."

Father: "Ernest, what is your impression of the island?"

Ernest: "I think I can smell a rubber tree, papa. For just yesterday I read in my natural-history book that on a hot day like this you can smell a rubber tree miles off. So we'll be able to make our own rubber boots, papa."

Francis: "And our own auto tires. How lovely!"

Ernest: "Oh, papa! How fortunate! I can tell by the foliage of those trees on that slope yonder that they are cocoanut palms. Now we can have all the cocoanuts we want to eat. And

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we can saw the shells into halves and make some bowls for our dear mother."

Francis: "Did you hear that, mamma? You're going to get some bowls."

Father: "It appears to be in every way a most delightful little island, and not at all the barren waste that I at first feared it might be."

Fritz: "But, father, why is it that such a pretty little island should be uninhabited? For there appears to be no one here."

Father: "There are many thousands of such islands in these parts, my son. Many are inhabited, mainly by natives. And some day, as the world's population increases, and the need of homes grows, I dare say all will be inhabited."

Ernest: "I'm glad myself this one is uninhabited. It'll be nice to have a whole island to ourselves."

Francis: "Yes, and if someone else comes along, we'll sell them some lots and make some money."

Father: "Oh, look, my sons! What terrible monster is that coming at us through the water?"

Fritz: "A shark! It's a huge shark, father! But have no fear. I have my trusty harpoon. And with it I will save you and my dear mamma and my dear brothers."

Father: "Fritz! My rash son! What are you planning to do?"

Fritz: "When the shark gets close enough, I'm going to aim for his right eye. Now!

Watch me take aim! There! I hit him right in the eye, as I intended. I've got him! I've got him!"

Francis: "Yes, you have *not!* You missed him by six feet—just like I said you would."

Father: "Quick!—somebody cut the rope! He's towing us out to sea. We'll be capsized!"

Ernest: "I have a knife, papa. I'll cut the rope. There! That saved us."

This part done, we went on in to shore, finally pulling up on the bank of the little river that supposedly emptied into the sea there. Don't imagine, though, that it was done as quickly as I'm telling it. No, sir-e! There was a lot more talk about rocks and reefs, and then great satisfaction when the safe little bay, at the imaginary river's mouth, came finally into sight.

(Now, did you thoroughly understand that? There was a lot of talk about a river and bay, but there was nothing like that there at all—just the straight unbroken shoreline. The river and bay were all imaginary. I thought I'd better stop here and make that perfectly clear.)

Dee-Dee set us to unloading when we were all out, telling us to put everything in a pile on the beach, the dressmaking dummy included, and temporarily cover it all over with the canvas that he had brought ashore.

"How about the chickens?" asked Scoop. "Do you want them kept tied till we get settled in the big cave on the other side? Or shall I

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turn them loose here, and depend on them following us over?"

"I'm hoping," Dee-Dee earnestly studied the interior, "that we do find a cave near by. For the rainy season will soon be upon us, and we'll be much more comfortable in a cave. Besides, a cave will give us better protection from possible enemies. But while we're looking for a cave we'll have to make our home here close to our boat."

"All right," Scoop comically tried to hide his face. "I know I'm dumb. You don't have to make a diagram of it."

Red was over peeking in the trees.

"Where are they?" he greedily asked Dee-Dee.

"What?" Dee-Dee asked in return.

"The bananas you hung up here."

"I really don't know what you're talking about," Dee-Dee vacantly looked off into space.

Red edged around him to where Peg and I were.

"Say, what's the matter with that guy, anyway?" he dropped his voice. "Is he completely ickey?"

"You're the one that's ickey," Peg told him. "For can't you get it through your thick head that this is a tropical island away out in the middle of the ocean somewhere? All we know about it yet is what we've seen since we landed here. We don't even know its name."

Red pointed to one of the ducks.

"What's that?" he eyed Peg closely.

"A duck, of course," Peg told him.

"That's what *I* thought, too," he wagged.

"So I'm all right so far. And what's that?" he pointed to one of the freed hens.

"A hen," Peg further told him.

"Boy, I'm at least holding my own! There's hope for me yet, I guess. And what's that?" he pointed to a rock under the fringing trees.

"A rock," he was told.

"And is that the sun up there?"

"If it isn't," grunted Peg, "the world has been awfully fooled for the past million years."

"And is my name Meyers?"

"Yes," Peg broke into a broad grin. "Horse-face Meyers!"

"*Donald* Meyers is the way I remember it," came stiffly.

"But what's all this leading up to?" quizzed Peg.

"Well, one of us is crazy, and I've been trying to figure out who. You say it's me. But I think it's you—and Dee-Dee."

"Oh, cut out the acting, Red," I then went at him. "You know blamed well what Peg means. We're just pretending that this is a strange island. We know there's bananas and cocoanuts back there some place, and a monkey, too—but until we've actually come across them in our explorations we shouldn't say anything about them.

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That's why Dee-Dee gave you that blank look, Red."

"Oh," growled Peg, "he knew that all the time, Jerry. He's just trying to be important."

"So what?" came impishly.

"For two cents I'd take you over there in the bushes and tie a knot in you."

"You and who else?" Red dared, in his tantalizing way.

Peg got back into character.

Fritz: "Oh, father! See the pretty flowers over there under the trees. May I go and gather some?"

Father: "Yes, my son, if you are careful. But do not wander out of sight. For there may be grave dangers inland that we know nothing about. There may even be hostile natives on the other side of the island, though I have seen no traces of any other inhabitants yet. But I *have* observed a number of rather frightening animal tracks. So it'll pay us all, I'm sure, to be constantly on our guard."

Fritz: "And may my dear little brother Francis go with me, father?"

Father: "A fine brotherly spirit, my son! I commend you for it. Yes, indeed!—take your little brother with you, by all means."

Fritz: "Oh, thank you, father! Come, Francis dear."

Francis: "Oh, yeah?"

Fritz: "Come, darling brother. We'll go gather some pansies for mamma."

Francis: "Yes, and I'd probably come back with a pansy on the end of my own nose. No, thanks!"

Fritz: "Let me take your hand, little brother. That's it! And now let us go tripping off into the forest together."

Francis: "*Ouch!* For the love of Pete!—why don't you jerk a guy's arm off?"

Scoop came up just as they disappeared into the bushes.

"What are they fighting about, Jerry?" he asked.

"They aren't fighting. They're just playing."

"From the way Red's squawking it sure sounds like a fight to me."

"Oh, he's just feeling hilarious."

We had the stuff all unloaded when they got back.

"Where are your pansies?" I asked Peg.

"Oh," he grinned blandly, "we were too busy studying up on our geography to bother with pansies. You see, my dear little brother had the silly idea that he had been on this island before. He seemed to think, too, that his name was Meyers, or something. But he knows better now. Tell us your name, brother dear."

"Francis Robinson," came meekly, though with a sly side glance with hidden fire in it.

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"And what's the name of this island?"

"Oa——"

"What?" Peg got him again by the neck.

"I don't know," came quickly.

"And what's my name?"

"You know what I'd like to tell you," tittered Red.

"Come on," Peg began to tighten. "Tell me my name."

"Boy," squirmed Red, "this is going to hurt, but it's worth it—YOU BIG FAT-HEAD!"

And jerking away he ran off laughing.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOOTPRINT IN THE SAND

DEE-DEE AND Scoop were gathering wood for a fire.

"Shall I light it?" I got out a match.

"Oh, no!" Dee-Dee quickly stopped me. "You mustn't start it that way."

"Of course, not," blandly chimed in Scoop. "Matches haven't been invented yet. Boy, are you dumb!"

"My mistake," I meekly put my match back.

Dee-Dee got down over some fuzzy stuff (tinder, I heard him call it later) with a flint and steel.

"This is the way the Robinsons did it," he told me, striking the flint and steel together to create a spark.

I had heard before of this primitive method of fire making and watched curiously to see just how it was done. But Dee-Dee didn't quite have the hang of it, or something.

"Is this the way we're always going to start our fire?" I grinned, as he whacked away, trying to catch one of the sparks in the tinder.

"I did it at home," he sweat, still whacking away.

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"What's the matter?" Red nosed in. "Can't you fellows get the fire started?"

"The flint and steel seem to be a little bit out of adjustment," I told him.

"The *which*?" he let out more neck.

Then, seeing what was going on, he got out a match.

"Here, take this," he offered.

But Dee-Dee was down on his hands and knees now, puffing at the tinder like a blacksmith's bellows.

"I've got it!" he cried, as a wisp of smoke came up. "I've got it!"

"For the love of Pete!" Red turned to me, pop-eyed. "Where did that fire come from? Out of his mouth?"

"Never mind where it came from," I told him. "Hurry up and get some more wood and keep it going, so we can start dinner."

"Oh, boy! 'Weenies,' huh?" he smacked. "I can hardly wait."

"Maybe you better lean against me, Red," I told him.

"What for?"

"I have some bad news for you—and you might faint."

"Well, don't keep me in suspenders. What is it?"

"There aren't any 'weenies.' I didn't buy any."

"Oh, you're kidding!"

"No, honest."

"But why didn't you?"

"Well, I just didn't—for I didn't think we'd be here for dinner."

"Then what's the fire for?"

"Dee-Dee probably is going to cook some stuff of his own."

"Yes," Dee-Dee heard, "I'm going to warm up some canned baked beans."

"Then there absolutely and finally aren't any 'weenies?'" Red looked at me with still a faint ray of hope.

"Absolutely and finally not," I laughed.

For he can get the craziest monkey-like look on his face when he tries!

Dee-Dee started working on one of the bean cans with a sharp rock.

"Didn't you bring a can opener?" I asked him.

"A what?" he stared.

"Never mind! Never mind!" I quickly tried Scoop's trick of hiding my face. "My mistake again. But you *could* use a knife," I hinted.

"Yes, I could—if I had one. Or a fork, either."

"Didn't you bring any knives or forks?" I began to stare.

"It was hard to remember to pick up everything in that storm," he meekly apologized for himself, looking out at the wreck.

"But there *are* some knives and forks out there on the boat, huh?" I pinned him down on that.

"Oh, sure! And dishes, too."

"Then there aren't any dishes here, either?"

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"I brought a frying pan," he beamed. "So we'll have something to cook in."

"But no knives, forks or plates, huh?" I kept on about that.

"No," he finally admitted.

"Then I'll pole out and get some," I started off.

"Oh, no!" he quickly stopped me. "We aren't supposed to go back to the wreck till to-morrow. We've got to explore this side of the island first."

"But how are we going to eat without forks and plates?" I almost yelled at him.

"I guess we'll have to do like the Robinsons did," he smiled faintly. "I guess we'll have to eat with our fingers, or clam shells. There's plenty of them around."

"All right," I laughingly made the best of it. "If they did it I guess we can do it."

"I'm hoping," he gave me another faint smile, "that we can find some cocoanuts this afternoon. For the Robinsons, you know, found the coconut shells very helpful. They even fashioned the shells into spoons, of a sort. But I better get back to my work."

"How many cans are you going to open?" I asked him, as he further pounded away.

"Two. Here's the other one."

"Well, shove it over, if you want it opened."

"And you won't cheat?" he looked me in the eye.

"No, Dee-Dee," I laughed. "I won't cheat. That's a promise. I'll open the can just like you."

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And I did it, too, dumping the contents into the frying pan along with his, and later eating my share out of the pan with a clam shell.

Our mothers almost had cat-fits when they heard about it later—how we all sat around the frying pan on the beach and ate out of it with clam shells that we had picked up there. Red particularly caught Hail Columbia for it at home—his mother telling him that if *that* was the kind of table manners he used when he was out of her sight, never, *never* would he get away again. She wasn't bringing up a cannibal, etc. etc. etc. She had more noble aspirations for him, etc. etc. etc.

But we all thought it was dandy fun. And there'd be still more fun, I happily told myself, when it came to making the cocoanut-shell spoons and bowls. I didn't particularly care now whether we ever got those dishes off the wreck or not.

Bossy Bell droopily waded in with her kegs while we were eating, and after a mildly reproachful look at us fell to nibbling around us. The chickens and ducks, too, seemed to think it was their duty to keep within sight of us, so all in all it was a very homelike scene, and one that reminded me very much of similar domestic scenes described by the Robinsons in their book.

Red scraped out the last bean.

"Oh, boy!" he patted his stomach. "Was that ever a meal! Thanks, Dee-Dee."

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"But to-night," I told Dee-Dee, "we'll furnish the meal. For we've got all kinds of good stuff in a basket."

"Yes," Scoop put in, "I wouldn't mind topping off with a piece of that chocolate cake right now. Anybody second me on it?"

"No," I quickly headed him off. "Wait, and we'll have it all to-night."

Just before we got up, the goat came tearing through the bushes, headed right for us, with the squealing fiery-eyed pig hot behind. To escape them, we fell backward, two on one side of the frying pan and three on the other, the goat leaping over the pan when he came to it, but the pig clattering right through it. Then on down the shore they went pell-mell, and finally out of sight.

Then out came the donkey, but more leisurely. Stopping him, we relieved him of his kegs—and the cow, too, while we were at it. The goat and pig already had lost theirs, so everything with them now was all right in that respect, if they'd just peacefully go about picking their own living and quit their fighting. I had the feeling, though, from what I had seen of that old pig, that nothing could live in peace with her. She sure was a spiteful cranky old thing. But imagine her chasing a goat! Boy, I bet that never happened before. I want to tell you, too, that the goat was just about scared out of his wits when he went by. His eyes stuck out like peeled onions. And was he wheezing! He certainly didn't look like the

fiery goat that had put the fat man and his son through the hedge, so soon before.

This brief thought of the fat pair set me to wondering more about them, particularly the man himself. Defeated at the dock, was he now on his way to the island to take Dee-Dee's steamboat away from him, or possibly try to kidnap him? I couldn't make myself believe the latter, for kidnapping, I knew, was almost as serious as murder itself. No man in his right mind, no matter how greedy, would attempt either. But mindful of my promise, I decided, whether or no, to keep Dee-Dee in sight as much as I could while I was there. Something unforeseen might pop up. And I didn't want it said of me afterwards that I hadn't done my duty.

Our frying pan and shells properly washed and put away under the canvas, and the canvas itself weighted down all around with rocks to keep out prowling animals, we took a final sweeping look out toward the wreck and then set out single file, with Dee-Dee leading with an air gun, just like the Robinsons, to first find a spring, if possible, and then a cave.

Of course, both were there, the spring directly across the island from where we had landed, and the cave in the rocky east end. Probably any one of us could have gone to either blindfolded. But to keep up the fun we had to sort of roam around, talking about this and that, with Scoop (I mean Ernest!) dishing out that learned natural-history

stuff of his, and Dee-Dee (as the father) coming in with more complimentary and critical big talk.

And all the time we were just about dead for a drink! But finally, to our great joy, we detected a clear little fern-bordered stream trickling into the wide-waters (excuse me, I mean the sea!) on the north side, and at its head, a rod or two inland, a deep cold bubbling spring.

Red couldn't wait for his turn with the rusted cup that some camper had left there, but fell down on his stomach and started lapping up the water like a dog. Scoop, I think, got the first cupful, then Dee-Dee, and then Peg. But before I could take my turn, Red, who had finished and stepped off a few yards, let out a squawk that literally lifted the hair all over my head. He couldn't have yelled any scarer if he had suddenly stumbled into a pitful of rattlesnakes and ghosts.

"What is it?" Peg sprang over. "What's the matter?"

"Cannibals!" again squawked Red, pop-eyed.

"Where?" Peg jerked his eyes around—not expecting to find an actual cannibal there, of course, but someone.

"There," Red pointed down to a naked footprint in the sand.

An ordinary-sized footprint there wouldn't have been anything unusual at all, with the place open to anybody and campers often running around half naked. But this footprint, let me

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tell you—and no wonder it almost knocked Red's eyes out of his head!—was at least twenty-two inches from heel to toe. Peg put both of his own feet in the print, with still two inches to spare.

Farther on was another footprint, just like it, and between the two, to one side, a round indentation that could have been made by a peg-leg. But what were we to conclude from the prints?—that some peg-legged giant had been hanging around the island, or was still there?—or was it some kind of a trick?

CHAPTER IX

IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES

PEG WENT at Dee-Dee about the big footprint.

"Is this some other set-up of yours, or some trick?"

"No," Dee-Dee shook his head.

"But you were here this morning, hanging bananas and cocoanuts in the trees."

"Yes, and I left a monkey here. But I never saw those prints before. Honest, cross my heart."

There was truth written all over his face, too.

"Maybe this explains about the monkey," I thoughtfully put in.

"What do you mean?" Peg wheeled.

"Well, monkeys are awfully curious, aren't they?"

"I don't know. You answer him, Red. You're better able to than anybody else here."

"Listen!" Red weakly rolled his eyes. "I've just had the wits scared out of me. Don't insult me, on top of it."

"But what were you going to say, Jerry?" Peg prompted.

"Well, if monkeys are as curious as people say, wouldn't this one have been over to see us before now? I've been wondering why it didn't show up. That seemed queer to me. For certainly it

must have heard us from the time we first hit the wide-waters."

"I bet this big-footed guy stole it," Red's eyes began to swell up again. "Or if he's still here, I bet he's got it tied up."

"Well, quit looking so scared," laughed Peg. "Gosh! That footprint isn't going to jump up and strangle you. Anybody can camp here. It's a free island. And anybody can have big feet, too, for that matter."

"*That* big?" Red gave the unusual footprint another wild look.

"Well," shrugged Peg, "it *is* pretty big, I'll admit. But what of it? If the guy tends to his own business, we'll certainly tend to ours. Or if he starts after us, we'll be able to outrun him that much easier—with a foot like that, and a peg-leg to boot. The big foot really is a help to us. So why stand around and shiver about it?"

"Oh, rats!" growled Dee-Dee, frowning. "Someone *would* come along, just when we wanted to have the whole island to ourselves. For we can have more fun here alone."

"The fellow must be in hiding, too," I put in. "And if he stole the monkey, that doesn't sound so favorable for us."

Red gave another wild pop-eyed squawk.

"And do you suppose, fellows, he ate up all our bananas and cocoanuts, too?"

"Where did you put them, Dee-Dee?" asked Peg.

"Up that way," Dee-Dee pointed toward the rocks.

"And where did you turn the monkey loose?"

"In the same place."

"I never heard of a monkey swimming," Peg considered its possible escape from the island that way. "And as you say, Jerry, if it was still here, and loose, it should have been over to see us long before this. So maybe it *was* stolen and carried off. Or maybe the fellow has it tied up, up here in the rocks some place. But even that isn't so bad for us. He probably thought it was a wild monkey. If we saw one, under similar circumstances, we'd quickly take it ourselves and tie it up. I still say there's nothing to get excited about."

"But why is he hiding?" I pointed out. "For unless he's as deaf as a post, he'd know, like the monkey, that we were here. Any fairly loud sound at all in the wide-waters carries from shore to shore. You know that yourself, Peg. But instead of coming down to see us land, as any ordinary camper would—and certainly, what we did was enough to excite anybody's curiosity!—he goes and hides. Which *I* still say is a bad sign."

"Maybe he's ashamed of his big foot," grinned Peg.

"I think myself," I excitedly guessed, "that he's an escaped convict—or in league with Dee-Dee's uncle."

"Oh, sure!" Peg dryly pulled my last theory to pieces. "Dee-Dee's uncle *would* pick out a secret

helper, to hide here and spy on us, with a foot as big as an elephant's. And then, of course, the helper *would* go around leaving his bare footprint in the sand—and particularly by the spring, one of the first places we'd go to. You certainly reason things out cleverly, Sherlock. We'd be in a pickle without you."

"But he still can be an escaped convict," I grimly clung to that theory.

"Yes," nodded Peg, "that's possible. But escaped convicts aren't so plentiful. And one with a foot that big would have had his picture in every newspaper in the country. We couldn't have escaped it, or forgot having seen it. I'd sooner think myself," he waggled, "that he's some kind of a human freak, who hates to be seen. That's why he ran and hid. But come on," he daringly started off. "Let's go up and find out."

"Go up where?" I uneasily held back.

"To his tent, if he's got one, or to the big cave, if he's hiding there, or wherever he is."

"Not me," Red promptly waved Peg off.

"Aw, come on! Don't be a sissy."

"Nothin' doin'. I don't propose to have a foot that big planted in the seat of my pants."

"If you don't come willingly," Peg threatened, "I'll come back and drag you."

"Yes," I finally got up enough grit to start myself, "come on, Red. We won't be in any particular danger if we keep together. And I want to see who's right—me or Peg."

"Oh, all right," Red finally gave in. "But I

can think of six hundred and forty-eight things I'd rather do."

There were seven of the naked footprints in all, all leading up the hill, and then we lost them as the sand ended and the rocks began. Boy, there was no pretending now! Even Peg was nervous. And when we came to the first loaded tree on the hillside we hardly gave it a second glance.

It sounds silly, I know, but honestly, if one of those towering giants that the famous Jack hunted down had suddenly loomed up over the hilltop, I wouldn't have been a bit surprised myself. For whether convict or freak, I had the feeling that we were going to find an old whopper of a man up there.

But there was no tent anywhere around the crest. Nor did we find anything, nor any sign of anything, in the big cave (Bible Cave was our name for it) when we finally got up the courage to look in. Of course, we didn't know what was clear down below in the newer cave, described in my "Whispering Cave" book. But unless he was a human mole of some kind, he couldn't live down there in the dark, beside that inky pool.

From the big cave we went over to the smaller "Singing Tree" cave, as we called it, for reasons given in my "Caveman" book, and then up and down and through the rocks, and along the shore below and every place. But there was no one there, either with big feet or small. Nor did we see any sign of the monkey.

So our much relieved conclusion was that the

big-footed man, whoever he was, had taken the monkey and gone, leaving us in complete possession of the place.

Dee-Dee was dancing now.

"Oh, boy!" he cried. "What a break for us."

"But how about the monkey?" I asked him. "You'll have to pay for it, won't you?"

"What of it?" came indifferently. "We've got the whole island to ourselves—that's the main thing. Whoopee! Boy, are we going to have fun now!"

Red, feeling safe, got quickly (and greedily) back into character.

Francis: "Oh, brother Ernest! What kind of a pretty tree is that down there on the side of the hill? I wish it would turn out to be a banana tree."

Ernest: "I read in my natural-history book that banana trees are shaped like that. It has a trunk, too. And all banana trees have trunks extending down into the ground. So it may be a banana tree."

Francis: "Papa, let us run down and see if it is."

Father: "Very well, my curious little son. You may run on ahead, if you wish."

Francis: "Oh, papa! Look! Brother Ernest! Look! It *is* a banana tree. Oh, goody, goody! Look at the big one I just picked."

Fritz: (to Francis) "Boy, that little excursion into the bushes sure helped your technique! But keep it up, little brother—only don't make a pig

of yourself, just because the bananas are free."

Francis: "I always thought, papa, that bananas grew in bunches. For in the stores in our old home town in Holland——"

Fritz: (to Francis) "Switzerland, you dope!"

Francis: "Well, they're right together. What's the dif? But as I was about to remark, papa, that back in our old home town in wherever-it-was, the bananas that I saw in the stores were always in bunches. But here they're hanging separately to the lower limbs—very easy to get at, and very good-tasting, but not at all as I had expected to find them. How do you explain this, papa?"

Father: "Ahem! I think I'll have to appeal to our learned young natural-history student here. Ernest, you heard your younger brother's very pertinent question. How would *you* account for the unusual distribution of the fruit here?"

Ernest: "Oh, that's very easily explained, papa. You see, according to my natural-history book, there are two different species of banana trees. The best known is the *Ring-around-the-rosey* species, where the bananas all get together in a huddle and hold hands. But this evidently is the more rare *Button-button-who's-got-the-button* species, where each little banana cutely buttons itself to a separate twig."

Father: "Bravo, my son! Bravo!"

Francis: "Anyway, they're blamed good."

Fritz: (to Francis) "Well, slow up—you've had four already."

Francis: "Now, if we could just find some cocoanuts, huh?"

Father: "Yes, Ernest! Didn't I hear you say something coming in, about sighting some coconut palms hereabouts?"

Ernest: "I think that's a coconut palm straight ahead, papa."

Father: "Splendid! Come, boys, let us hasten and see."

Francis: "Oh, goody, goody! Look, papa! Cocoanuts! A whole treeful."

Father: "What a magnificent sight! You may well dance with joy, my young son, for this is indeed the most valuable discovery yet. And here you behold the great wisdom and generosity of nature. Not only does she provide substantial food, for whoever may be in need of it, but material for dishes in which to serve the food, as well. No longer shall we have to eat with clam shells, out of a single frying pan. From these coconut shells we will form bowls and spoons a-plenty. Oh, how delighted your dear mother will be to learn of this discovery! For this noon it grieved her greatly, gentle-mannered creature that she is, to see her darling sons eating from a common dish like hungry little cannibals."

Francis: "Wow! You sure can dish it out, papa. I bet, with a little flour and water, you could whip up a dictionary."

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Father: "This indeed has been a most productive afternoon. I find great satisfaction in our discoveries, and in what we have learned thus far of our surroundings. We appear to have been cast upon the shores of an unusually productive little island, and one that not only will provide us with the necessities of life that I had hoped for, but many luxuries as well, which I had not dared expect. But the day is fast drawing to a close. So let us hasten back to the shore, and to your dear waiting mother, each of us bearing her a gift from these two trees that we have so fortunately discovered."

Francis: "You mean, just one cocoanut and one banana apiece?"

Father: "Yes—we must not be wasteful."

Francis: "Oh, let's take two bananas, anyway."

Fritz: (to Francis) "Pig!"

Father: "No—just one, my little son."

Fritz: "But aren't we going to try and find a cave to-day, father?"

Father: "No, Fritz. That will be our objective to-morrow. To-night we will shelter ourselves as best we can under the canvas on the beach, guarded by the stars, with our animals about us, and the hope in our hearts that the night will carry through peacefully, with many more just as peaceful nights to follow."

Francis: "Boy, you *are* good! I have to pinch myself to make sure I'm not listening to the radio."

Father: "Well, boys, have you all a banana and cocoanut apiece?"

Fritz: "Yes, father."

Father: "Then let us immediately set our face toward the shore. Come!"

Ernest: "I don't like to be a tattletale, papa—but there's an awfully suspicious bulge in somebody's back pocket."

Francis: "Well, you needn't all look at me!"

Fritz: (to Francis) "Let me see that pocket."

Francis: "Keep your hands to home."

Fritz: "I thought so! Cheat!"

Francis: "Give me that other banana, you big gyp! Give it back."

Father: "What's the matter, Fritz?"

Fritz: "He took two bananas, father. I took this one away from him. What shall we do with it, to punish him for his gluttony?"

Father: "Hum! How about you taking a bite, Fritz, then Ernest, then Jack and finally myself?"

Fritz: "Fine! Are you looking, little brother? This is your punishment. Um-yum! Plenty good! All right, Ernest. You're next."

Ernest: "Boy, you didn't leave very much! But here goes. And here's a little left for you, Jerry—I mean Jack."

Jack: "Thanks. Um-yum! And you get the peeling, father."

Francis: "And I always thought that *rats* lived in holes!"

Fritz: "Did you say rats, little brother?"

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Francis: "Yes, I said rats. And on top of that you're a lowdown sneaking thieving——"

Fritz: "Father, I see some more pretty flowers over there in the bushes. May I go over, with my dear little brother Francis, and pick some?"

Francis: "Say!—listen, you big ham-bone! You worked that on me once before! Now, you keep away from me."

Father: "I'm glad, Fritz, to see you take an interest in the beautiful as well as the practical. And I'm glad to see you include your little brother in your pleasures. Yes, go!—and take him with you. I'm sure it will have a very beneficial effect on him."

Francis: "Say, haven't I got any friends around here at all?"

Fritz: "Come, brother dear!"

Francis: "You get away from me, you big baboon! *Ouch!* Say, that's an arm you're pinching—not some wood."

Fritz: "We're going to pick some pretty little flowers, aren't we, brother dear?"

Francis: "Yes, we are—NOT!"

And breaking away, just as he had before, Red ran off toward camp as fast as he could go, a jeering laugh trailing behind.

CHAPTER X

AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY!

THE ISLAND, at the point where we had landed, was about one-eighth of a mile wide, and maintained approximately that same width to its extreme west end, where it ran off into a boggy cat-tail marsh.

There was a dense willow thicket here, which one summer had been completely cut off by a family of Hungarian basket makers. But the next year the willows were all back again, seemingly thicker and hardier than ever.

The rest of the island was high and rocky—and when I say rocky, I'm not talking about rocks as big as my head, or even as big as a wheelbarrow. I'm talking about one basic sandstone rock as big as our own town hall, our three churches, our schoolhouse and about a hundred houses the size of mine, all put together—and sprinkled all over and all around the base with other smaller rocks that through the years had broken from it, and tons and tons of clean white sand.

This sand in places ran out into the water for twenty and thirty feet, thus providing a dandy wading place, but hardly deep enough for swim-

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ming. And out where it *was* deep enough, it was all mud bottom, as I have described. So we did very little swimming around there. Nor did we very often get into that big willow patch. It was too snaky and boggy.

Just why the island should be so high and abrupt at one end, and so low and boggy at the other, was always a mystery to me till one day an old fisherman there explained it to me. And I think that what he told me was true, too, for there was every evidence of it in the eroded rocks there.

He said that ages ago a mighty river had come down through there from the Great Lakes, filling the wide valley from brim to brim. What we now knew as Oak Island was then just a gigantic submerged sandstone rock. But even then, when it was completely under water, the current, from the east, kept washing and wearing away its face. A lot of the sand thus loosened up naturally collected in back. A lot of mud and silt similarly collected there. Then less and less water came down, as some change at the lakes took place, the great river correspondingly dropping, till finally a sandstone peak came out into sight. In time the water there receded to a mere marsh, the remaining river, as we knew it to-day, having cut a channel for itself farther south. And there the great sandstone rock stood, high and dry now, but all worn and fantastically cut by the action of the water and the wind, to become completely wooded in time—all sandy and

clean at one end, like a boy with a freshly-washed face, and all boggy and marshy at the other end, like the same boy with a dirty neck.

The receding river, and the rain, had cut little gullies into the sides of the rock, these finally, after many years, becoming deep rocky-walled wooded ravines. Starting with a shallow natural cave in one of these walls on the island's north side, a hermit, years ago, had hewed himself a cave big enough to live in, with a ledge path leading down to it from above, and up to it from below. Then, as recorded in my "Whispering Cave" book, a second hermit, of a sort, in trying to enlarge the cave had tapped another natural one in back, almost on the same level, which led down and down into the very heart of the great rock to a pool on a level with the canal. I'll tell you more about these caves later, and better describe them to you, but right now I thought I'd kind of give you a general picture of the island as a whole.

In all, it was about seven-eighths of a mile long, the rocky end taking up about three-fifths of it, and widening there to double the width of the other end. So, as you can see, it wasn't a very big island. But with its rocks and caves, and its sandy slopes, it sure was a fascinating spot, particularly for boys like us. For what boy doesn't like to climb around in rocks? And at the extreme east end, let me tell you, you could be just as risky as you pleased. For here there was an

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almost abrupt drop of more than seventy feet. Yet even here, in the rock's barest parts, a few stunted red cedars had found footing, while all over the rest of the island, and particularly in the flat at the foot of the rock-studded west slope, there were native trees of all kinds and sizes. There were ferns all through the rocks, too, ranging in size from tiny things that had to be looked at twice to be noticed, to some three and four feet tall, in the moister spots, particularly around the spring. The spring itself was right at the foot of the path that wound down from the higher part, the water mysteriously coming out of the rock somewhere. And to further picture to you just how things lay, the mentioned spring was almost directly across from where we had landed. So there you have it all.

In our search for the man with the big foot, we had first gone up the hill, as I have recorded. Finding nothing above, we had carried our search to the beach below, and finally even to the boggy willow patch.

From there we had hurried back to the hillside, where the loaded trees were, with the results recorded, and now the four of us, Dee-Dee, Scoop, Peg and myself, were hurrying after Red to our camp on the south shore.

And what a mess we found when we got there! For that snooply greedy old cow, let me tell you, finding our supplies, had eaten up everything that she could possibly get into. And the stuff

she couldn't get into, such as the canned soup and baked beans, she had spitefully kicked out into the canal.

"Bossy Bell, did you do this?" Peg gravely eyed her, after a quick look around.

"Moo-o!" came the plaintive droopy-eyed response.

Which settled it for Peg!—or at least he pretended that it did, the big monkey!

"No, Red," he stiffly rose to his cow's defense. "It couldn't have been my Bossy Bell. Her innocent manner proves it. Why, those eyes of hers are like a baby's! It must have been the pig, instead."

"Don't you suppose I know a cow from a pig?" Red fairly yelled. "Do you think I'm that dumb?"

"That's debatable," grinned Peg.

"Did you really catch the cow in the act?" I asked Red, thinking myself that it looked more like the work of the pig.

"I sure did," he waggled. "She was just hoisting off the last bean can when I got here, with the last loaf of bread going down her gullet."

Dee-Dee kicked off his shoes and waded out after the stuff.

"This never happened to the Robinsons," he gave us a comical look, as he heaved the first can in.

Scoop came up with the dressmaking dummy.

"Poor mamma!" he sniffed, dabbing his eyes.

"Where did you find her?" I grinned.

"Over there in the bushes. She was horned and dragged in by her petticoat, I guess. For it's all ripped. And look at the bend in her back!"

"Did you see this, Dee-Dee?" I drew his attention to the wreck.

"Sufferin' cats!" he cried, dropping his other work and bounding out. "I *will* catch the dickens for that. That blamed old dumb-bell of a cow! I'd like to kick her block off!"

Peg bristled.

"Listen, stranger!" came in a deep western drawl. "Them thar air fightin' words out whar I hail from—makin' up pert talk like that about our favored wimmin folks! Do you hear what I'm a-tellin' you, stranger?"

But Dee-Dee hadn't any time for monkey-work like that now.

"I hope we can fix it," he anxiously tried to bend the dummy back to shape.

"Why worry about that crazy thing?" Red himself indifferently waved it off. "It's the bread that we've lost, and the crackers and cake, that worries me."

"Did you say *cake*?" Scoop squealed in, big-eyed.

"Yes, I said cake."

"You mean——"

"Yes, I mean *our* cake," Red bluntly finished.

"She ate that, too—and our potato salad and our sandwiches and everything else."

"But where's the basket?" I quickly looked around.

"Ask Gene Autry's little Mexicali Rose over there," Red waved toward the still innocent-looking cow.

"You mean—she ate the basket, too?" I stared.

"Yes, and the bean crock and the dill pickles and the whole shootin'-match."

"Aw! She couldn't have," I told him. "I bet you've got the basket hid some place, huh? I bet you're just fooling."

"Hid nothin'. She ate it, I tell you."

"Now, you look a-here, stranger," Peg again nonsensically bristled in. "It ben't no wish of mine to add a notch more to the handle of this yar trusty six-shooter of mine. But the swivel-eyed spindle-legged nitwitted son-of-a-maverick who calls my Bossy Bell a *cake* eater, and then calls her a *pickle* eater, and winds up by callin' her a *basket* eater, is flirtin' with a late-model up-to-date streamlined tombstone, and I hain't a-meanin' maybe. Now, air them thar words sufficiently clear and elucidated to you, stranger?—or be it necessary fur me to emphasize 'em with lead?"

Dee-Dee was still trying to bend the dummy back to shape.

"I borrowed it from a cranky Steam Corners dressmaker," he explained to us his anxiety to repair it.

"I thought it was something that you picked up in a junk pile," I laughed.

"Oh, no!" he wagged. "It's a perfectly good dummy—or was, till this happened."

"Well," grinned Red, "if all you want is a dummy, throw it away and use Peg. He'll qualify."

"There!" Dee-Dee gave the dummy just the right bend. "That straightened it up."

"But it still doesn't look as neat as it did," I criticised.

"Oh, I don't care about the clothes—they're just some old ones of Aunt Trudy's."

"And what are you going to do with it now?" I followed him over to a low-limbed basswood tree.

"Hang it up here out of harm's way."

"It might be a good idea," I suggested, "to hang what's left of our supplies up there, too."

"Or build a tree house," he carried the suggestion farther, all aglow.

Oh-oh! More Robinson stuff!

"Are we going to do that, too?" I asked.

"If we find a suitable tree—of course. For the Robinsons did it. And I always thought myself that that was the best part of their book."

"I liked the part best where they all came in from the wreck in their tub raft, like we did. For everything ahead was new then. And I kept

wondering what they were going to find there, and what would happen to them."

"And that's just why I liked the tree-house idea," Dee-Dee wagged. "For I was afraid that cannibals would sneak up on them, or wild beasts. But when they all got up in their tree house, with the rope ladder pulled up, I felt perfectly easy about them."

Scoop came up looking at his wrist-watch.

"Five bells, fellows," he told us. "Almost time for chaw again."

Dee-Dee looked up at the sun.

"Yes," he nodded, with a calculating air, "that's just about the right time, all right. You guessed pretty good."

Scoop caught my eye.

"Now, what's this?" he dropped his voice, as Dee-Dee walked off. "Doesn't he know I've got a wrist-watch?"

"Of course," I laughed. "But he gets more fun out of pretending."

Dee-Dee called us over to an open spot beside the beach, speaking in character when he got there.

Father: "What say you to this spot, my sons? It's open and sunny. And we should have some means of telling the time of day, till such time as we can return to the wreck for the chronometer there. You, Ernest!—you're a studious lad! Tell me—how would you proceed to erect a practical sundial here? What would be your first step?"

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Ernest: "I'd draw a circle in the sand, papa."

Father: "And then what?"

Ernest: "I'd drive a peg into the middle of the circle."

Father: "Splendid! And the next step?"

Ernest: "Well . . . wherever the peg cast a shadow on the circle at seven o'clock in the morning, I'd mark that spot 'VII'—just like on a clock face. And at eight o'clock I'd mark that spot 'VIII.' Then at nine o'clock, I'd mark that spot 'IX'—and so on till dark."

Father: "But how would you know, my son, when it was exactly seven o'clock in the morning?"

Ernest: "You're sure making this hard, papa."

Francis: "Making what hard? What are you guys talking about?"

Father: "Aw, my little son! Greetings! And what brings you on the run?"

Francis: "Say, are you getting that way again?"

Father: "We're going to build a sundial here, my son."

Francis: "A sundial? What for?"

Ernest: (to Francis) "To tell the time by, you dope! And don't say anything about my wrist-watch, either."

Father: "Possibly you would like to help us, my little son."

Francis: "Now, listen! If you're all going crazy again, just leave me out of it. All I want to know is, whether you want more baked beans

for supper, or soup. Just tell me, and I'll pull out and let you muggs rave together just as long as you please."

Ernest: "Isn't there anything left besides beans and soup?"

Francis: "That's all we can find."

Jack: "What kind of soup is there?"

Francis: "Vegetable and tomato."

Jack: "And aren't there any crackers left at all?—or any bread?"

Francis: "Narry a cracker."

Jack: "Father, are there any more crackers out on the wreck?"

Father: "I doubt it, my son."

Jack: "Nor bread, either?"

Father: "I fear not. But the bread problem will be easily solved if we can find some manioc roots here. From these, when properly prepared, we will be able to make ourselves a very excellent and nutritious sort of bread, or cake, called by the natives of the West Indies, where the root abounds in great profusion, *cassave*. But let us get back to the problem at hand. And that is, how are we going to know when it's exactly seven o'clock to-morrow morning, without the aid of instruments such as a skilled navigator would use in computing time, or a chronometer? Has anyone the answer to the problem?"

Francis: "Listen for the factory whistles in Ashton—you dope! They always blow longer at seven. And now let's get this settled about the beans and soup. Which do you want?"

CHAPTER XI

THE STORM

IT WAS finally decided to have vegetable soup for supper, and while it was warming in the frying pan, we set to work on our cocoanuts, finding though that it wasn't as easy to make them into bowls as we had thought.

It would have been easy if we had had a saw. But you must remember that we weren't supposed even to have pocketknives! A couple were slyly used, as I'll have to admit, but with very little success. For those pesky shells were just like iron. Sometime try yourself to cut into one with a pocketknife. I bet you'll soon give it up. I know we did.

But we simply had to have bowls of some kind. We weren't going to have the Robinsons completely lick us on that. So we grimly kept at it, finding in the end that we could do just as good a job, or even better, by giving the whole nut a haphazard peg against the rocks. In that way we got out a number of fairly good halves, one of which we used for a ladle, when the frying pan was again carried off to some place where we could all sit around it in comfort.

And there we made our second meal (still little better than cannibals, we were later indig-

nantly told at home!), cleaning up the soup right down almost to the last drop, with the bananas that we had brought back, and the cocoanut meat that we had saved, for dessert.

The soup would have been more filling with crackers or bread. But it was plenty good, we all agreed, as it was—only Red, in hurrying to get the biggest share, as usual, almost choked to death on the bowl of his “spoon,” which he greedily bit off by mistake.

But we finally got the piece out of him, by holding him up by the feet and shaking him, after which we drew straws to see who would wash the frying pan.

“I’m out!” danced Red, with the longest straw.

“Me, too!” Scoop showed the next longest.

“I guess it’s you, Jerry,” laughed Peg.

“But where are you fellows going?” I quickly inquired, as they all started off together.

“Over to the spring to get a drink,” Peg told me. “Shall I bring you one, Jerry, in your bowl? Or do you want to go over yourself, when you get through?”

“Wait a minute, Peg! Let the others go on—I want to ask you something.”

“Yes?” he curiously came back.

“I don’t want you to think that I’m just trying to get out of washing the frying pan, but I have a particular reason for wanting to be with Dee-Dee. So would you mind washing the pan for me this time, Peg?”

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"Not at all," he generously consented, impressed, I guess, by my earnestness. "I'll be glad to."

"I shouldn't tell you this," I confided, "but I promised Dee-Dee's aunt in town that I'd keep an eye on him while he's here. She's afraid his fat uncle will try to kidnap him, or something."

"I've been wondering myself," Peg looked thoughtfully over the water, "if we wouldn't see something more of old fatty to-day. But it's too late for him now, I guess. I see it's starting to cloud up, too."

Hurrying after the others then, and ignoring their natural questions, I got a drink with them at the spring, and one for Peg in his bowl, finding him trying to stretch the canvas over some poles that he had set up on the beach when I got back.

The wide-waters, so mirror-like all day, was now filled with choppy little waves that ran about in scared uncertain circles. And the clouds that Peg had earlier noticed around the sun, had completely blotted it out.

Red looked from the threatening sky over to where Peg and Dee-Dee were hurrying with the tent.

"But you fellows aren't going to try and stay in that thing, are you?" he turned up his nose at it.

"Where else can we stay?" asked Peg.

"Why, over in the big cave, of course."

"You can't stay in a cave before you discover it," Peg went right on with his work.

"Oh, listen, fellows! You're carrying this too far. Let's go on over to the cave. Come on!"

"We're doing what we want to do," Peg told him. "And if that's what you want to do, go ahead and do it. Nobody's stopping you."

"And is this all a part of your plan?" Red then turned to Dee-Dee. "Were you really intending to make a tent out of that canvas?"

"Sure thing," nodded Dee-Dee. "That's what I brought it ashore for."

"But if you knew you were going to sleep here to-night, why didn't you bring along a regular tent—with ends in it?"

"Because," Peg answered that, "this is all the Robinsons had, and this is all we're going to have. So shut up about it."

Red knew how to give in when he had to.

"All right," he pleasantly stepped around. "It's all right with me. But, boy, will I laugh if you all end up with wet shirt-tails."

A sudden overhead thunder crash sent the ducks and chickens squawking in. Then in pranced old Toby, and after him the squealing pig. It sure was a lively spot for a few minutes, with us running about for rocks to hold the ends of the canvas down, sometimes almost colliding ourselves, and the squawking fowls and animals darting in and out around our feet.

When the rain came, about six, we all crawled

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in, the ducks and chickens trying to wedge in with us, the cow mournfully taking up her place at one open end and old Toby at the other, first one poking a begging head in, and then the other.

But scarcely had we settled ourselves, when a sudden sharp gust took that top away, just like paper. And there we sat, huddled around our supplies, with the cow still on one side of us, and the donkey on the other, with the chickens and ducks forming a disconsolate group around us, as the rain came down in buckets—with Red singing through it like one of those crazy robins that you see on the lawn in spring showers!

“Oh, it ain’t a-goin’ to rain no more, no more. It ain’t a-goin’ to rain no more,” he nasally whooped it up, with the rain dripping from his cap peak onto his freckled nose, and from there down onto his chin. “How in heck can I wash my neck? For it ain’t a-goin’ to rain no more.”

After about the tenth time of it, Peg grimly grabbed him by the back of the neck with one hand and the seat of the pants with the other, carrying him, yelling and kicking, down to the water’s edge.

“Oh, so you’re worrying about your neck, huh? You’re afraid you won’t have enough rain to wash it, huh? Well, I guess I can fix that for you.”

And out into the water Red flew, clothes and all!

“Now,” Peg wiped his hands of him, “go ahead and wash.”

Knowing Red's hot temper, I expected him to jump out and start pegging rocks. But instead, still bubbling, he merrily tripped off into a "spring" dance, first stripping off his shirt and undershirt, and then his pants. All he had on now was his shoes and shorts! And, boy, was *he* a spectacle, with that red head and that freckled mug of his, as he pranced around and around, in the water and out.

"Tra-la-la-la!" he sang in waltz-time. "Tra-la-la-la!" And with each final "la" he sort of sprang artistically into the air, kicking his feet together and throwing out his arms, in attempted imitation of a similar dance that he had seen some Tutter girls give one time in a play. I remembered the dance myself. And the way the girls gave it, in their flowing white Grecian gowns and garlands, was pretty. But what Red did, let me tell you, was nothing to put in the Sunday supplement!

How long he would have kept it up, or what he would have attempted next, I have no idea. For he sure was wound up. But the dance came to a sudden end when the pig, either taking it as a personal insult, or so disgusted with it that she couldn't stand it any longer, took after him with blood in her eyes, running him around and around the beach.

Which was more than old Bossy Bell herself could withstand. *She* had playful moments, too, she wanted us to know. And out she pranced, first friskily kicking up one end, with a hilarious

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“Moo-o!”, and then the other end—old Toby himself, with a disgusted look back, going off into the trees. And all the time, mind you, it was raining great guns, with the thunder booming away overhead like a million powder blasts all going off together, and the lightning flashing every which way.

Ordinarily I hate to be out in a storm like that. The lightning scares me. But with all that crazy monkey-business going on, I hardly noticed the storm. *Laugh?* Say, I thought I'd bust—especially when Red, unable to shake the pig there, took off up the beach, thinking, I guess, that he either could outrun her or could more easily lose her up there. But that old pig, let me tell you, didn't intend either to be outrun or lost—so pretty soon back Red came, tumbling pop-eyed out of the bushes just like the goat that noon, with the pig still hot after him, and old Bossy Bell friskily bringing up the rear.

The ducks and chickens scattered in all directions as the crazy trio went by, and off down the shore toward the willow patch. There Red somehow did succeed in making his escape, though the storm was all over, and the sun out again, though very low down, when he finally limped in.

“And I used to think I liked roast pork so well!” he fell in a weak heap. “Oh, me! Oh, my!”

“How about roast beef?” I laughed. “Have you turned against that, too?”

"Oof!" he disgustedly rolled his eyes.

Which brought Peg bristling in again.

"Now, you look a-here, stranger," he savagely drawled. "That's e-nuff of that. That's my Bossy Bell you-all air a-talkin' about. And I hain't permittin' no white-livered galoot of a tenderfoot to go 'oofin' at my Bossy Bell."

"I'll 'oof' her with a rock, and that crazy pig, too," threatened Red, "if they ever try that stunt again. Boy, they just about run me ragged!"

"It's your 'oomph,'" I told him. "They just couldn't resist you."

"You fellows could have headed them off," he resentfully growled, "if you'd wanted to."

"Yes," laughed Scoop, "but who'd want to?"

The ducks, themselves again, were swimming noisily about, a few yards off shore, in search of last-minute tidbits. Toby, too, was grazing near by again, evidently wanting to keep close to us when night came. But the day was through so far as the chickens were concerned. First one and then another flew up into the trees, where, after a lot of grumbling over their recent wetting and things in general, they finally settled for the night.

Dee-Dee had wanted them to roost on the ridgepole of our tent, in pattern of the Robinsons, and even tried to coax a couple of them down when we got the tent up again. But finding that he just frightened them, he gave it up.

We had a roaring beach fire going now, around which we hung our soaked clothes to dry, keep-

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ing on only our shorts. These soon dried on us, and as soon as our shirts and undershirts were dry, too, we put them on, and in that way finally turned in.

"What time is it?" I asked Scoop, when we were all settled in a row, with our heads toward the fire.

"It's hard to tell without a sundial," he nudged me, "but I *think* it's ten minutes after nine."

From off down the island came a faint plaintive "Moo-o!"

"Well, answer her," I laughingly nudged Peg.

"MOO-O!" he accordingly boomed back.

"Oh, for the love of mud!" snorted Red. "It's too bad you two can't get married."

"Moo-o!" again came from the distance.

"You didn't leave her down there stuck in the mud, did you, Red?" Peg asked anxiously.

"Well, what if she is?" came indifferently. "And that pig, too. Boy, they can be stuck in the mud clear up to their necks for all I care."

Peg crawled out.

"I'm going down there and take a look," he told us, in his steady conscientious way.

"Wait a minute," Dee-Dee followed him out. "I'll go, too."

"Was the cow really mired, Red?" I asked, when the others were gone.

"Oh, a little bit! But I'll be blamed if I'd go chasing off down there in the dark."

"But Dee-Dee feels responsible," I told him. "And you know how Peg always is, if he thinks

anything or anybody is in trouble around him.”

“Boy!” squirmed Scoop. “I wish we had something dry to lay on. This sand isn’t so comfortable, if you ask me. It makes me itchy.”

“Yes,” suggested Red, “I’d rather pull the tent down and wrap it around us. What do you say, Jerry?”

“That suits me,” I agreed.

There was a big moon out now, lighting up the wide-waters and the beach around us almost like day. And, boy, was there a mess of stars out! It was a perfect night—just cool enough to be comfortable, with that kind of a fresh tang filling the air that you always notice after a summer storm.

“How about getting closer to the fire this time?” suggested Scoop, when we had the tent down and ready to spread out.

“Sure thing,” Red took it and carried it over. “Let’s get right up here beside it. It’ll be fun to lay here and watch it. And throw on some more wood, Jerry.”

“We mustn’t build it up too much,” I guardedly revived it, thinking of our pants and shoes, which now hung almost directly over it on a long limb that we had fixed up.

Scoop came over with the dummy and set it up beside the revived fire.

“Mamma needs drying out, too,” he laughed.

“Yes, leave it there,” tittered Red, “and see what Dee-Dee and Peg say when they get back.”

“I wonder what’s keeping them,” I looked down the shore.

One thing, I knew that Dee-Dee was just as safe with Peg as he was with me—or even safer. But, even so, it made me uneasy just to have him out of my sight.

“Aren’t you going to get in, Jerry?” Red accommodatingly held up the canvas for me, he and Scoop having already settled themselves comfortably.

“No,” I told them. “I think I’ll sit here and watch the fire.”

I was still sitting there, carefully feeding it, with Red and Scoop now sound asleep, when the others came in.

“What happened to the tent?” Dee-Dee asked right off. “Did it fall down?”

“Well, not exactly,” I evaded, “but we thought we’d try it this way. And then Scoop decided that mamma needed drying out, too.”

“We thought, when we were coming up the beach, that it was one of you fellows standing there,” laughed Peg.

“And what did you find out?” I asked him.

“Oh, rats!” he scowled. “That’s the last time I ever go chasing around in the dark after a cow. For there was nothing the matter with her. She was just standing there nibbling the willows when we got there.”

“I suppose we should have brought her back and milked her,” Dee-Dee put in. “For the farmer told me to milk her night and morning. But you can’t very well do that kind of stuff by

moonlight. So I guess she'll just have to wait till daylight. But come on—let's get to bed," he started off sleepily. "For, boy, am I tired! You know, I've been on the go ever since four o'clock."

Peg stopped to feel of his pants.

"I was in hopes I could put them on," he grunted. "For I don't like this idea of running around without them, even in the dark—or sleeping without them."

"They wouldn't be so comfortable now," I told him. "But they ought to be nice and dry by morning. For there's a lot of heat coming up from those coals. And it'll keep coming up the most of the night."

Having found Scoop and Red right in the middle of the canvas, each with an end for a cover, Dee-Dee was trying to roll them around to make room for the rest of us.

"Quit it!" Red angrily socked out in his sleep.

"Hey!" Scoop sleepily rubbed his nose. "Who hit me?"

"It was all an accident," laughed Dee-Dee. "So go back to sleep again. Jerry, you can get in next, if you want to—and then you, Peg. I'll take the outside."

In this wise we all settled for the night, Scoop and Red back deep in sleep a minute after their little fracas, and the rest of us soon following.

CHAPTER XII

MORNING

WE FOUND out the next morning why the Robinsons themselves always got up so early in their book!

First the rooster started in.

“Cock-a-doodle-doo!” (A little bit faint, he told himself critically. He’d have to do better than that.)

“Cock-a-doodle-DOO!” (There! That was better—especially that “DOO.” If he could just get it all like that, now.)

“COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO-O-O!” (There! That really was puttin’ it in the old groove.)

“Boy, I wish he’d choke,” growled Peg, after half an hour of it.

Then the hens picked it up.

“Cluck, cluck, cluck,” came sleepily from one, which, I suppose, meant: “I guess it’s time to get up. For I can hear Big Stuff over there tootin’ off.”

“Yes,” clucked another, from another limb, “we’ll soon have to start picking up worms again.”

“I hope we have a good day of it,” clucked the first.

“Yes,” clucked the second, “but don’t you

think the gravel's terribly poor around here? So sandy. And sand never did agree with my crop."

"Sand or gravel are all alike to me," clucked the first. "My crop can stand anything—even shingle nails."

"Oh, you lucky girl!" clucked the second. "I wish I had a crop like that. But then I always was terribly sensitive. It's a family trait."

"How do you like it here?" clucked the first.

"It's a change," clucked the second. "But I'd rather be home on my own roost. I just know I'm going to miss my nice nest, too."

"That makes me think," intimately clucked the first. "I haven't seen any nests here at all. Have you?"

"No, I haven't," buzzingly clucked the second. "And it's been worrying me, too. For this is my day to lay. But how can I lay without a nest?"

"Who are those boys, anyway?" curiously clucked the first.

"Search me," clucked the second. "I never saw them till yesterday. Why they brought us here, I can't imagine. And the way they tied our feet, too, and tossed us around! I felt quite indignant about it myself."

"Well," clucked the first, "I hope they know enough to build us a nest."

"Let's give them a hint," clucked the second. "We can do it in a modest maidenly way."

"But, how?" clucked the first.

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"Well," clucked the second, "let's keep saying over and over again—'We want a nest! We want a nest! We want a nest!' Like this—'Cluck, cluck, cluck! Cluck, cluck, cluck! Cluck, cluck, cluck!'"

"All right," clucked the first. "You start it, girlie."

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" (See? That's the way to do it.)

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" (Oh, it's fun, isn't it? I like doing it.)

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" (We're going good.)

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" (And *how!*)

And then the ducks got to going it.

"Just listen to those silly hens up there," one quacked.

"Yes," quacked another, "I'm glad I'm not a hen. The stupid things can't even swim!"

"Well," quacked the first, "let's quack them down—what do you say?"

"Sure! Let's!" quacked the other. "You go first."

"QUACK, QUACK, QUACK!" (There's a sample for you, you stupid old worm chasers.)

"QUACK, QUACK, QUACK!" (And there's another sample.)

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" (Why, did you hear that! The brazen things! They're giving us the raspberry.)

"QUACK, QUACK, QUACK!" (Boy, is that burning 'em up!)

“CLUCK, CLUCK, CLUCK!” (Put some pep into it like that, girlie. Don’t let ’em quack you down. Give ’em the old hi-hi. Talk it up! Talk it up!)

Then along came the pig, to add to the concert.

“Wee, wee, wee!” she squealed.

And then came the goat.

“Baa, baa, baa!”

And then the donkey.

“Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw!”

And finally the cow.

“Moo-o!” she friskily pranced in. “Moo-o! Moo-o!”

“*Hey!* Look out!” squealed Peg, as she almost stepped on us.

“I think we better get up while the getting’s good,” blinked Dee-Dee.

“Yes,” I yawned, “there’s a little too much early-morning traffic around here for safety. Come on, Scoop. We’re going to get up.”

“But it’s only four-thirty,” he blinked at his watch.

“Well, you’re taking your life in your hands if you stay there any longer,” I told him, crawling out myself.

“Come on,” he in turn shook Red. “We’re going to get up.”

“Huh?” grunted Red, without even opening his eyes.

“We’re going to get up,” Scoop shook him again. “Come on. Wake up.”

"Huh?" came sleepily again.

"What'll we do with him, Peg?" asked Scoop. "Shall we throw him in the canal?"

"No," laughed Peg, "he got enough of that yesterday. But I'd fix him if I had some corn or oats."

"I can get you some cracked corn," offered Dee-Dee.

"Swell! Let's have a handful."

Getting it out of a bag that he had hung in the basswood tree beside the dummy, Dee-Dee brought it back, Peg taking it and carefully sprinkling it all around Red's exposed bare feet.

"Now, watch the fun," he chuckled.

Spotting the corn almost instantly, the chickens and ducks came flying and waddling, their feud for the moment forgotten. So it wasn't very long, as you can imagine, before Red was up squawking. For you try sleeping with about twenty hungry chickens and ducks fighting for corn around your bare toes, and see how you like it.

But a squawk, louder even than Red's, came from Peg when he went to get his pants. For they weren't there! There were four pairs, still hanging where we had left them, but Peg's, the biggest of all, either had fallen down into the fire, and burned up, or someone had stolen them.

"Haw, haw, haw!" jeered Red, rightfully crediting Peg with the corn trick. "Is this ever

good! You'll have to go home in your shorts, Peg. Haw, haw, haw!"

Dee-Dee was fishing around in the ashes.

"Is this yours, Peg?" he fished out a charred belt buckle.

"Yes," came sickly from Peg, after a quick look.

"Well," Dee-Dee pulled down his own pants to put on, "I guess then that just about settles that."

"Yes, Peg," Red followed suit, never happier in his whole life, "I guess that just about settles that. Either you'll have to go home in your shorts, or wear mamma's petticoat."

Peg watched, sick, as the rest of us dressed.

"But haven't you any more pants or overalls out on the wreck?" he desperately asked Dee-Dee.

"No," Dee-Dee finished one shoe, and started lacing the other.

"But you *can* get me some from town, can't you?" begged Peg. "Gee-miny crickets, Dee-Dee!—you've got to. For I can't run around without pants."

"I tell you what we can do," studied Dee-Dee, now ready for the day himself. "We can make you a pair out of the tent cloth. And come to think of it, I believe the Robinsons did that, too."

"Oh, no!" almost wailed poor Peg, the most

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humiliated, I guess, that he ever had been in his whole lifetime. "Go to town and get me a real pair, Dee-Dee. Please!"

"*Town?*" repeated Dee-Dee, with a vacant look. "I don't know what you mean."

"Of course, not," Red maliciously jumped in. "For can't you get it through that thick head of yours, you dumb dodo, that you're on an island away out in the middle of the ocean? And then you talk about going to town! Boy, are you fogged!"

"I guess he's got you there, Peg," I laughed. Dee-Dee came up with the tent cloth.

"How long do you want them?" he asked Peg. "Knee length, or clear down to your ankles?"

"But, Dee-Dee! For the last time——"

"No," Red heartlessly cut in. "It's either that or nothing, Peg. For you're the guy who knew all about the geography around here. Remember how you took me into the bushes to educate me? *Oak Island?* Poof! Whoever heard of such a place? This was an island away out in the middle of the ocean. So now make the best of it, Big Brain. You were so good at giving it, now take it."

Peg gritted his teeth.

"All right," came grimly. "I'll take it. But who's going to make the blamed things?"

"I'd like to," tittered Red, as he dropped down to put on his shoes.

"Listen, pee-wee! You're out of it. How about you, Dee-Dee?"

"Sure thing—I'll do the best I can. But you'll have to wait till we go out to the wreck. I think there's a pair of scissors out there. I know there's some needles and thread. Or if necessary, we can cut the pants out with a knife."

"Or a saw," put in Red, with another of his hateful laughs.

"They may not be such a good fit," Dee-Dee apologized ahead. "But they'll be pants, of a sort. They'll cover you up, anyway."

"Five pairs of pants all in a row," groaned Peg, "and it had to be mine that burned up! That's luck for you. I guess I haven't been living right. But I still don't understand how it happened. For they were all right when I went to bed."

"Moo-o!" came plaintively from behind him.

"There!" laughed Red. "There's your answer."

"Say—" Peg's eyes swelled. "Say, do you suppose——"

"Of course," Red cut him off. "She probably smelt them all in turn, and liking your smell the best she pulled at them till they fell down. Your dear little Bossy Bell! You should give her a kiss for that."

"Bossy Bell!" he eyed her sharply. "Did you do that to me?"

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"Moo-o!" she nuzzled him with her nose.

"All right, Bossy Bell!" he drew himself together loyally. "If you did it, it's all right with me. Anything you do is all right with me. But let's get some breakfast and hurry out and get those cutters. For the sooner we get those pants cut out, and put together, the better I'll like it."

Dee-Dee began checking off the jobs that had to be done before we could eat.

"I'll need firewood," he named the first job.

"I'll get it," Red flew off.

"And the chickens and ducks ought to be fed," came next.

"I'll do that," Scoop started for the feed bag in the tree.

"And what do you want me to do?" asked Peg, who, in his industrious way, never wanted to be the last when jobs were being given out like that.

"Can't you guess?" Dee-Dee looked at the cow.

"Oh, oh!" Peg blinked. "I was afraid of that."

"Did you ever milk a cow before?"

"No. But I'll never learn any younger. So here goes."

"Oh, but you can't take that," Dee-Dee stopped him, when he started off with the frying pan. "I'm going to need it."

"What'll I milk in then?" asked Peg.

"Fill the bowls."

"All right," grinned Peg.

And did he ever look funny as he got one of the little bowls and started twitching around where the milk was supposed to come from. I guess it looked funny to Bossy Bell, too, accustomed as she was to a regular milking pail, for she nervously backed off. And then, as Peg tried it again, she let out like a lightning streak with her hind feet, putting him over on his back and the cocoanut shell that he had been twiddling around under her halfway across the wide-waters.

And then, mind you, before he could get up, she turned and started licking him in the face, just as sweet as you please!

I thought Dee-Dee would split. As for Peg, he didn't know whether to jump up and kick the cow's back porch off, or keep up his pretended liking for her. But his usual kindness triumphed, and finally he got her to stand through it, as he filled first one bowl and then another.

"When do you know when to stop?" he asked Dee-Dee.

"Well, the usual plan is, I guess, to keep going till there isn't any left."

"But what are you going to do when you've got everything full?"

"Clean out one of the bean cans," laughed Dee-Dee.

But one can wasn't enough. Peg, in all, used three, I believe. And there the filled cans and

bowls stood in a row on a shelf that we had fixed up in the lower branches of the trees. It was there that we were now keeping our supplies, too. And it was right near there, in a little fireplace that we had fixed up, that we were doing our cooking.

I had asked Dee-Dee a couple of times what he wanted me to do. But he was too busy with his flint and steel to answer me. And now, with the fire going briskly, he gave me a wink, just as much as to say: "You stick around, Jerry—I've got something to tell you."

"What is it?" I finally asked him.

"Well, how'd you like some Aunt Jemimas for breakfast?" he whispered.

"Pancakes? Oh, boy! Have you really got some?"

"Yes. But, listen! I want the other fellows to think that they're manioc pancakes—and here's how we'll work it: You go over there by that big willow tree, and all of a sudden you come running back with some horse-radish roots that I partly buried over there."

"Horse-radish roots?" I stared.

"You remember that part of the book, don't you, where the boys grated the manioc roots, and how later they made the gratings into a batter and baked it?"

"Yes, but you just said horse-radish roots," I reminded.

"Well," he shrugged, "we had to have some-

thing to grate, and I didn't think that it was necessary to send clear down to the West Indies for some of the real roots. You fellows wouldn't have eaten the stuff, anyway. But when you come running up with the horse-radish roots I'll let on—as the father, of course—that they're the real thing. And I'll tell how they can be made into delicious pancakes, and set everybody to grating, just like in the book."

"But if we're going to have real pancakes," I asked, "what's the sense of actually grating the horse-radish? Why not just pretend that we're grating it? For horse-radish is plenty hard on the eyes, let me tell you. You'll have us crying all over the beach."

"That'll be the fun—seeing the fellows wiping their eyes," he tittered. "Of course, you and I'll have to be in it, too—otherwise they'd get suspicious. And now listen closely!"

"Yes?" I bent down.

"Just west of the spring, in a hollow oak, you'll find four packages of Aunt Jemimas. I hid them there this morning. Later I was going to have you fellows make up some batter from the grated horse-radish roots—after 'discovering' them, of course—and then slyly switch to the real batter. Just some more pretending, you know. But now I have a better idea—with more fun in it. Just you and I'll switch to the real batter—and we'll go ahead and bake our cakes and brag how good they are. Then the rest'll

try it with their horse-radish batter. But when they try to eat their cakes—oh, oh! They'll wonder how we can possibly eat such hot stuff. They'll think we're wizards—or have cast-iron tongues. We'll get all the fun out of it we can—and then we'll tell them the truth, and let them make some real batter and fill up.”

“But how are we going to do the switching?” I puzzled over that part.

“We'll need water to make the batter—at least that's what I'll suggest. So you be the first one over—only throw away your horse-radish and make some real batter. They'll all follow, one after another, with me last. To tell the truth I hadn't planned to 'discover' the manioc roots quite so soon. But I guess we need the pancake flour as badly now as we ever will. Certainly, the thought of soup or beans for breakfast doesn't appeal to me. But you run on over and make the 'discovery,' Jerry. And then we'll act it all out, just like the Robinsons.”

CHAPTER XIII

PANCAKES!

"SAY, JERRY," Scoop stopped me on the way to the willow tree, "what's the rule on that banana tree?"

"Rule?" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you don't see Red around anywhere, do you?"

"He's out getting firewood."

"Firewood, my eye! He dumped one armful down, and then he lit out for that banana tree as fast as he could go."

"The little pig!"

"We've got to put a stop to that, Jerry, if we expect any of the bananas ourselves. For he'll just keep on at 'em, that way, till there aren't any left. And why should we let him get double, and go without ourselves?"

"Boy," I growled, looking off in the direction of the banana tree, "I'd like to be there right now, with a nice big paddle."

"Do you know how I have that kid doped out, Jerry?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, we've always laughed about his appetite, and made a joke of it. And liking to be the

monkey, he's just got in the habit of making a regular act of it. Like when he took that last scrape out of the bean pan yesterday noon—he knew we'd call him a pig, or tell him not to scrape a hole in the pan, or something. That choking act with the spoon was largely put on, too. And then when he took that extra banana at the tree—he knew that we'd pounce on him for it. At least, that's how I've got it doped out. He's just gorging himself to be noticed. And we're the losers by it."

"Here he comes now," I lowered my voice. "He's been eating, all right."

"Yes, and look at that bulging back pocket! If that isn't an invitation for more razzing, I never saw one."

"I believe you're right about him, Scoop, though I never looked at it in that light before. I always took it for granted that he was what he pretended to be. But we'll fix him! Tell Peg when you see him, and tell him to just keep mum this morning. And then we'll lay for him over there with paddles, or set a trap for him, or something. We'll get some fun out of it, as well as save ourselves some bananas—and maybe teach him a lesson."

"Well, where have you been?" quizzed Scoop, as the subject of our discussion smugly sauntered up.

"Oh, just strolling around," came carelessly.

"Did you find any more big footprints?"

There was a meaning titter.

"No. But I found something else. And were they good! Um-yum-yum!"

We were supposed to ask what—but we didn't!

"Nice day, isn't it?" Scoop looked around.

"Ahem!" coughed Red, feeling of his back pocket.

"Yes," I similarly looked around, "it sure is a swell day, all right."

"Ahem!" Red coughed again.

This time he actually pulled the banana out a couple of inches!

"And isn't the air swell this morning?" Scoop filled his lungs.

"Perfect," I copied him again.

Peg came up grinning.

"Who'd like some mush and milk for breakfast?" he asked.

"I'd rather have some bananas myself," Red quickly got in.

"Bananas?" repeated Peg, stiffening. "Say, have you been——"

"Are we really going to have mush and milk, Peg?" Scoop hurriedly cut in.

"Well, I've already got the milk," Peg was safely sidetracked, "if you fellows can scare up the meal for the mush."

"*Bananas* and milk ought to go good together," Red again got in.

"Say, that *is* an idea," I swung in. "Why don't you go over and pick some, Peg? And you, too, Scoop."

"Yes," Scoop started off. "Come on, Peg."

"But shouldn't we ask Dee-Dee first?" Peg held back, in his square conscientious way.

"How about that, Dee-Dee?" Scoop called across. "Is it all right with you if we pick some bananas for breakfast?"

"Why, of course," came the ready consent. "Nature put them there for our general use."

"Good old nature!" Red stepped around, the banana still showing.

And again Peg would have been on him, I think, if Scoop hadn't cleverly intervened.

"Come on, Peg," he hurried the other off. "And you, too, Jerry."

"No. I think I'll take a little walk in the other direction," I told him, sauntering off.

Red followed me.

"Some people are dumb," he laughed smugly.

I was supposed, of course, to ask him what he meant by that—and then later report to Peg, to get the excitement going. But I was down now gathering roots.

Red bit into one.

"Horse-radish," he spit.

Dee-Dec, having tired of waiting on me, I guess, then came up in character.

Father: "Ah! I see you have discovered something, my son! What is it?"

Jack: "Some roots, father. Do you suppose, by any chance, that they are manioc roots, such as you were talking about yesterday?"

Francis: "Yes, we ought to have some *maniac* roots in this crowd—with all the maniacs that are loose around here!"

Father: "Oh, such a discovery would indeed be most welcome, my son! But let me have one of the roots, for more careful observation."

Francis: "It's nothing but horse-radish, you dope!"

Father: "Eureka! Congratulations, my son! Congratulations!"

Jack: "Then they *are* manioc roots, father?"

Father: "Beyond a shadow of a doubt. Your curiosity and creative observation have been most wonderfully rewarded this day, my son. For in these rather common-looking roots, we see the solution to our bread problem. Oh, how wonderful indeed is the bounty of nature! But let us not wait another minute to avail ourselves of this rare treat. Quick, Jack! And you, too, Francis! One of you run to the spring and wash the roots, and the other get me the grater that I so fortunately brought from the wreck."

Francis: "Oh, so it was all planned, huh? You've got the grater all ready, huh? Well, you can have it all, fuzzy-brain! No horse-radish bread for me!"

Father: "Fie, fie! Let us have no more of

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this babble. Would I, your own parent, urge upon you food that I did not in every way deem suitable for your requirements? Have you so little confidence in me as that? Your brother has most becomingly hurried off in the performance of one of the appointed tasks. See then that you profit by his example and perform the other task, as ordered. Away now, and get the grater that you see there by the fireplace, and bring it to me here at this stump, which will serve as a table for our work."

And I guess Red got it, too! For it was there on the flat-topped stump when I got back with the washed roots. He had a more docile air, too, I thought—as though he had been told bluntly to do as he was told, or get out.

Peg stood by grinning.

"I just heard that you found some manioc roots, Jerry," he winked meaningly.

Then Dee-Dee came up with five straws.

"Draw one, Jerry," he held them out.

"What's this for?" I quizzed.

"To see who grinds the manioc roots."

"But I thought you said each fellow was going to grind his own," I reminded.

"Well, I've just been talking it over with Scoop and Peg. And this is the way we've decided to do it."

Oh, so that was it, huh? That explained that meaning wink of Peg's. He and Scoop knew the whole thing. And this was a trick to punish

Red for his greediness—instead of laying for him at the tree, as had been suggested.

“Let me see!” I slyly watched Dee-Dee’s eyes. “Which one shall I draw?”

And when he winked with his right eye, I drew the outside one on that side.

Peg drew next, and then Scoop. Which left just the two. And did Red ever squawk when (as intended) he got the deciding one.

“Oh, Dee-Dee!” he tried to beg off. “Have a heart! For you know blamed well that that’s nothing but horse-radish. And if you try to bake it, and eat it, it’ll burn your insides out. It’s all right to pretend. But I think it’s going too far when you ask a fellow to stand over a horse-radish grater and cry his eyes out.”

Dee-Dee got back into character.

Father: “Fie, fie! I’ll have no more of this rebellious talk. So proceed immediately. Catch the gratings in this cocoanut shell. And, Jack, when the shell is half full, run with it to the spring and add to it sufficient water to make a thin batter. In the meantime I’ll see that the skillet is made ready. We’ll soon be able to show our doubting young man here what manner of cakes our manioc roots make.”

“All right,” Red sourly gave in. “If you say so, I suppose I’ll have to do it. For you’re the one who’s giving the party here. But it’s the biggest bunch of baloney that *I* ever heard tell of.”

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The rest of us waited around to see the fun—nor was it long coming, either!

“Phew!” Red stopped halfway through the first root, too blinded to go on.

But he had said that he'd do it, no matter how silly it looked to him, so he grimly set to work again.

This time he tried grating with his head turned almost completely around. But this didn't work so well—it was too hard on the fingers, he found. So next he tried getting around where the breeze off the water would blow the fumes away. And finding that this wasn't so good, either, he next tried blowing the fumes away himself. There'd be a quick grate, then a vigorous blow, then another grate, and another blow, and so on, with the rest of us just about ready to bust. That freckled pug-nosed mug of his was good for a laugh at any time. But, boy, was he a spectacle now—with those brimming goggy eyes of his! Even his nose was running.

I was glad to get away, with the gratings, to get a free laugh. But what followed, I think, was even funnier. For Red, of course, figured that after the cake was baked, and sampled, it would be quickly tossed aside. Then was when he intended to hee-haw with his superior: “I told you so!”

Scoop got the first bite. Oh, boy, he smacked! And so it went around, each of us praising it to the skies, Red watching dumfoundedly. Con-

vinced finally that we actually were eating it, he gingerly took a bite himself, expecting something peppery and biting. But here, he found, to his great amazement, was something just as good as ma made at home!

"Well, I'll be cow-kicked!" he raked his hair. "I certainly never dreamed it would taste like that. Why, it doesn't taste like horse-radish at all."

Dee-Dee got back into character.

Father: "Well, my sons, what is the verdict? Shall we make a morning meal of these manioc cakes? What, Jack, say you?"

Jack: "Oh, yes, father! Let's have some more."

Father: "And you, Ernest? What is your wish?"

Ernest: "I think they're delicious, papa."

Father: "And, Fritz? What of you?"

Fritz: "I could eat a dozen, father."

Father: "And now we come to the little doubter! Francis my son, let this be a lesson to you! Be not so hasty hereafter to question the gifts of nature, or the good intentions of those who have your welfare most at heart. The preparation of the manioc roots was, I'll grant, an unpleasant task. But see how bountifully we have been rewarded. Your brothers have all given a favorable opinion of the cake. Now, what say you? Would you care for more yourself?"

Francis: "And *how!*"

Father: "And how many would like to bake his own? Let me see your hands. Ah! I thought that would appeal to you. Fritz, as the oldest, you shall bake yours first. Ernest, you will come next. Then Jack. And, Francis, then you. So hurry back to your grating."

Francis: "*Me?* Oh, you mean just grate my own, huh?"

Father: "Oh, no! The grating is to be your exclusive task—and, may I say, your punishment for your earlier unworthy doubts, and certain other things that have just been brought to my attention. But let us get going! For the day is fast advancing. Ernest, while awaiting your turn, suppose you see what further important discoveries you can make, in the plant and vegetable kingdom. Jack and Fritz, I have thought some of building ourselves a home in some large tree, so look you hereabouts for a tree of the proper requirements. As we are to leave for the wreck as soon as we have breakfasted, I'll attend to getting our tub raft ready. Francis, you are to signal your brothers, in turn, when their portion of the manioc gratings have been made ready."

Francis: "Oh, for the love of mud! Why should I have to be the goat? Why can't I look for a tree? Why should I have to do all the grating?"

Father: "Come, come, Francis! Cease this dallying. You have been given your task. See

then that you perform it, or else go without yourself. Here only those who work, eat."

Peg and I didn't know whether we really were supposed to look for a house tree, or whether that was just an excuse to get us away from there. But we took a quick look around, anyway, going through the flat first and then working up the hill. But even that biggest oak, clear up on top, hadn't much to offer.

Getting his call finally, Peg ran back, making himself some real batter at the spring, and baking it. Then came Scoop, then me—and finally the bleary-eyed grater himself.

"Um-yum-yum!" he smacked, as he poured his horse-radish batter into the hot pan.

Then he started peeking at it.

"What's the matter with it?" he puzzled. "It looks lumpy."

"You probably didn't stir the batter enough," Peg made up that excuse for it.

"But it doesn't smell the same."

"Oh, that's just your imagination. It smells all right to me."

"Sure thing," I helped the fun along. "I think it swells smell."

"You think it—*what?*" Peg laughed.

"Mells smell," I muddled it again.

"Try again, Jerry."

"I mean—smells swell," I finally got it right.

Red had discovered now that he couldn't turn it!

"Say! What's going on here?" he scowled around suspiciously. "Did you guys water that batter on me?"

"Oh, it was just a little joke," Peg tried to look guilty. "But let it cook a little more, Red," he urged. "I think it'll be all right."

"Oh, I'm going to throw it away," growled Red, disgusted.

"No—don't waste it!" Peg stopped him. "What if it is a little bit crumbly? Here's a good-sized piece," he fished it out with the tin strip that we were using for a turner. "Try it, Red."

"I don't want to burn myself on that tin."

"Well, open up your mouth then, and I'll toss it in."

"O-k," Red stretched. "Let 'er go."

And in it went!

"How is it?" grinned Peg.

Red froze—then he gulped—then his eyes almost popped out of his head.

"Say! *Gee-miny crickets!* WOUGH!"

And out it came, and halfway to the water's edge, with Red chasing after it for water to cool off with.

"What did you guys do that for?" he came back half crying and half mad. "You might have made me sick."

Peg told him just what we had done, and why.

"It's your pay for being a pig," came bluntly.

“And you’re going to get some more of it, if you don’t keep away from that banana tree.”

A real pancake breakfast followed then, with plenty for all, Red at first refusing to eat with us, but finally coming up for his share, all right again. They would have been better if we had had grease to fry them in—in fact, some of them were pretty black. But we put them down, with the milk and bananas after them, and then merrily set out in the tub raft for the wreck, Dee-Dee poling behind as before.

CHAPTER XIV

LOOTING THE WRECK

WE FELT pretty rich when we got back.

In mamma's tub we had a whole ham, a crate of eggs, a small sack each of flour and sugar, a big bag of potatoes, a small bag of dried onions, four cabbages, four pounds of rice, ten packages of Aunt Jemimas, six packages of breakfast food of different kinds, six cans each of sweet corn, peas, tomatoes and spaghetti, a five-pound can of frying compound, four quart-jars full of butter, a big piece of cheese, twelve cans of soup of different kinds, a bottle of vinegar, a can of baking powder, two cans of cocoa, a box of cookies, two bottles of catsup, salt and pepper, and a small jar of mustard.

In the fourth tub we had six china plates, the same number of matching soup plates, cereal bowls, cups and saucers, two big vegetable dishes (with covers), a gravy bowl, sugar bowl and cream pitcher, six silver teaspoons, the same number of matching soup spoons, tablespoons, knives and forks, a gravy ladle, butter knife and sugar shell, and a combination medicine and toilet kit containing a bottle each of iodine, stuff for gargling, cough syrup and liniment, also

cold tablets, stomach pills, salve, bandages, a pair of scissors, needles and thread, a box of buttons of all sizes, six new tooth-brushes, six pocket combs, an assortment of tooth-paste—and finally, packed lightly on top, six sheets, six double blankets and six pillows.

In the fifth tub we had two ten-quart galvanized pails, a similar-sized enameled drinking pail with matching long-handled dipper, a wash basin, two frying pans, three saucepans of different sizes, two large kettles (with covers), a teakettle and coffee pot, a butcher knife, two paring knives, a long-handled cooking fork, two mixing bowls, a potato masher, an egg beater, a can opener (hurray!), a biscuit tin, a small oven, a lantern, two dish pans, four cakes each of kitchen and hand soap, three cans of scouring powder, two dish mops (or dish rags, as we called them), and a stack of dish and hand towels.

Nor was that all, for each of us, in our regular tubs, had all the saws, hammers, crowbars, pick-axes, nails, screws, spikes, rope, wire, bolts, bits, canvas and everything else that we could pick up—and, boy, we picked up plenty! No Christmas turkey ever was picked cleaner than that old boat, let me tell you. And come to think of it, it was a good deal like Christmas, too—every minute a new surprise popping up, I mean. How Dee-Dee ever thought of it all, I can't imagine. It would have been too much for me, I know

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that. I guess, though, Aunt Trudy was right at his elbow all through the planning and collecting—certainly those concluding items in the toilet kit (I mean the tooth-brushes and combs!) looked more like her work than his. He had cleverly put most of the stuff out of sight, too, for just such a return trip as this, pretending great surprise and joy himself as each new find came to light.

That was true, though, about the bread and crackers. He had brought in all he had of these in the first load—to later go down old Bossy Bell's gullet! But that was all right. We had flour and shortening, and an oven, too. So we could easily keep ourselves in biscuits. It would be fun making them. The bread and crackers would never be missed.

Boy, it was a layout, let me tell you! As I just said, it was just like getting stuff off a Christmas tree. I've had a lot of fun in my lifetime, but never as much as that. Nor was I ever so happy. And the fun that was bound to follow now! Oh, boy! Oh, boy!

First would come the "discovery" of the cave, with us excitedly moving everything over, and then there was to be another trip to the wreck to pry off every board and every plank possible there, for the speedy erection of a tree house. For there simply had to be a tree house, Dee-Dee declared. We'd get one up in one of the trees somehow.

And the meals we were going to have now! I had thought myself, when we were eating out of those cocoanut-shell bowls, that there couldn't possibly be any better fun than that. And it *was* fun, too. But this next fun, I told myself, was going to be even better. We'd still be the Robinsons, on a lonely island, but we'd have more comforts and conveniences. The days of just getting along with any old thing that we could pick up to cook with and eat with, were gone. The wreck had given us practically everything we could possibly need. And now we were going to do everything right up to snuff, too—cleaning out the cave and tidying it up, with everything in order in there, cooking everything just as good as we could, and thoroughly cleaning up afterwards, with the kettles so clean even on the outside that we'd be able to see our faces in them. We'd even rig up a motto to hang on the cave wall, such as "Home Sweet Home," or something like that. We were going to keep a mat outside the entrance, too—and the first guy who tracked mud into our nice clean cave—gr-r-r!—what he'd get!

Peg, as soon as he was out on the beach, started unloading. But Dee-Dee thoughtfully told him to wait a few minutes—he was trying to study out something, he said.

"What's he got on his mind now, Jerry?" Peg asked me on the side. "Why doesn't he want us to unload?"

"Ask him," I shrugged. "Don't ask me."

"Did he say anything about his uncle this morning?"

"Not to me."

"Well, I think he ought to step on it," came uneasily. "Or we may lose that tree-house lumber."

There was a yell from Scoop as he caught old Bossy Bell with her nose in the first tub.

"Hey! Get out of there," he drove her off. "We didn't bring *that* stuff in for you, too. If you're hungry, go nibble some grass."

"Yes," I quickly told Dee-Dee, "we better hurry and get that stuff in a cave somewhere, or we're liable to lose it, like we did that other lot. Peg thinks we ought to hurry and get that tree-house lumber, too—before your uncle gets here."

"Oh, I'm not worrying about that," came confidently. "For it's my boat. I have a perfect right to rip it up, if I want to. He couldn't stop me. In fact, now that we're all settled here, I'm beginning to doubt myself if we see anything of him, at all. For what could he do, if he did come—openly, I mean?"

"Peg's afraid he'll confiscate the boat."

"No, Jerry, he couldn't do that. He could stop us from using it—but he couldn't take it away from us. As long as we keep it out of the channel, we're safe. As for the island itself, it's free property. He couldn't legally drive us off. Or even if he did confiscate the boat, and drive

us off, he'd just find himself in hot water. For I could have him arrested for that. I would, too. And think how silly he'd appear when asked to tell a judge *why* he did it. No, he's too smart to get into a mess like that. So just let's forget about *him*. What I'm puzzling about is where to unload. And I've just about decided, Jerry, to pole around to the other side."

"You mean—pole the raft clear around to the other side of the island?"

"Yes," he nodded. "That'll save a lot of totting. If we unload there, we'll just have to tote the stuff halfway up the hill. But if we unload here, we'll have to tote everything clear up the hill, then over the top, and halfway down the other side."

"You seem pretty certain of finding a cave over there," I grinned.

"This is just between you and me now," came confidentially. "What I'm trying to do is to figure out the quickest and easiest way of getting settled over there. For all we have left here, you know, is two more full days—to-morrow and Monday. And they'll sure go fast. But what would you suggest?"

"Well," I carefully considered, "I don't know as poling around will save any time. But, as you say, it certainly will save work. So I think that's the thing to do. But, listen! You won't need us—we'll just be that much added weight. So why not let us go over afoot? Or Peg can go

with you and help pole, if you'd like that better."

"How about that, Peg?" he called. "Do you want to help me pole the raft around to the other side of the island, to unload there?"

"Sure thing," came willingly. "That'll be fun. But when do I get my pants?"

"Right away, if you say so. For that's what I promised you. But I'd rather wait till we get this stuff under cover, if that'll be all right with you."

But Peg, I could see, didn't like that "waiting" idea.

"How long will it take you to make them?" he asked.

"Oh, an hour, maybe. They won't be very fancy, you know."

"And it'll take about that same amount of time to pole the raft around," Peg calculated. "So why not cut the pants out here—it'll only take a few minutes—and while I'm poling you can be sewing. I'll gladly do all the poling if you'll do the other. For, brother, I want those pants!"

"All right," Dee-Dee laughed. "Get the scissors and the tent cloth."

The pants cut out, after a fashion, and our other things all loaded in one of the empty tubs, mamma included, Dee-Dee then got in himself, with his needle and thread, and with Peg behind vigorously poling they set out, it having been

further decided that we were to "discover" the cave on the way over, to save time, and meet them on the north shore with an exciting account of it.

When the raft was well off, we set off ourselves, stopping at the spring for a drink and then climbing the hill.

"Where are we going to cook dinner?" Scoop asked, halfway up. "On the other beach, or in the cave?"

"We couldn't cook it *in* the cave," I told him. "For the smoke would soon drive us out. We wouldn't want our stuff all smoked up, either. But I think we can cook it right outside the entrance. There's quite a wide ledge out there, as I remember."

"Yes," Red put in, "that's where Rory Ringer and I cooked when we camped here one time. There's plenty of room there—and shelter from the rain, too, from another ledge overhead."

"Did you fellows sleep in the cave?" Scoop asked.

"Sure thing," Red bobbed.

"Well, I don't know as I'd care to sleep there," shrugged Scoop, "with that hole in back, to the other cave. I'd be scared of something slimy crawling up from that pool."

"We stuffed the hole with rocks," explained Red.

"What we should have, if we're going to sleep

there," I suggested myself, "is a couple of doors—one in back for safety, and one in front to keep out the animals."

"You mean Bossy Bell?" asked Scoop, as we started down the ledge path. "Oh, she couldn't get down here—it's too narrow. Nor Toby, either. And there isn't much chance of either the pig or the goat finding us down here."

Red pricked up his ears.

"Oh, is that so!" he laughed. "You better take a rain check on that, Scoop. For it sounds to me as though the pig is down here already."

"I don't hear anything," Scoop listened.

"Well, *I* do," Red kept his ears cocked.

Then I heard it.

"It *is* her," I declared. "*There!* Didn't you hear that, Scoop?"

"All right," he grimaced. "I'll take the rain check. And you can put my vote down for a front door, too. For that's old run-'em-ragged, all right."

Then we heard the goat.

"Come on," Red ran on laughing. "Let's see the fun. They're down there in the cave fighting it out."

CHAPTER XV

MORE FUN

THE "HERMIT" credited with building the cave probably was some early trapper, who used it in running his trap-line in the surrounding marsh. Possibly he had crawled under the ledge during a storm, and finding that he could almost kick the sand out with his shoes had started then and there to dig himself a practical shelter for just such stormy occasions.

Then the neighborhood kids had started working on it, digging first on one side and then on the other, one generation following another, till now it was about twenty feet in diameter. The floor had been dug down, too, to the level of the outside ledge, and props had been put in to hold up the vaulted ceiling. There was nothing pretty about it—it was just a common practical man-made cave, with countless initials carved all over its walls, and its ceiling smoked black from the thousands of fires that had been built there—with the entrance to the inner cave directly in back.

The only light came through the door-like front entrance, and when we blocked this, the two fighters, noting a change, stopped momen-

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tarily to investigate. Then they went at it again.

"At-a-boy, Billy!" applauded Red, as the goat got in a particularly vicious bunt. "Give her some more, Billy!"

"Oh, gee!" I cried, as the pig then furiously sailed into the goat, knocking him clear off his feet and drawing blood. "I wish we could stop that, fellows. Look at her! She'll kill him."

Red heaved a rock in, momentarily separating them.

"Ya-ya-ya!" he mugged at the pig.

Which brought her headlong at him, thus giving the goat just the chance he had been looking for. Up he came behind her, head down, and, boy, did he smack her! *Wough!*

I had ducked back myself the instant I saw her coming. For I didn't want her to sink her teeth into me. Scoop got safely back, too. But poor Red wasn't quite quick enough. There was a smack, as the goat struck, then a blood-curdling squeal as the pig started off into space, and then, an instant later, an agonized bellow from Red, as she in turn smacked him and took him on with her over the ledge into the ravine.

When we finally got to him at the bottom of the ravine he had a bloody nose, a black eye and a head bump the size of a goose egg.

"Wha-at happened?" he asked groggily.

"Your parachute fouled," Scoop told him.

"Parachute?" he repeated stupidly.

"How are your ribs?" Scoop felt him over.

"They're all right. But my head hurts like sixty."

"Are your arms and legs all right?"

"Yes, they're all right."

Helping him up the beach to the spring, we bathed his bump with cold water, leaving him to rest there on the grass while we ran back to the cave to drive out the goat and get it ready to move into. But when we got there the goat was gone. Finishing inside, we next built two fireplaces on the ledge outside, and then, hearing Peg and Dee-Dee below, we ran down, Peg coming to meet us in his new knee pants.

"They're the very latest no-got special," he showed them off. "How do you like them?"

"Well," laughed Scoop, "they haven't made me wish that mine had burned up, too. But why do you call them the no-got special?"

"Because they no-got cuffs, they no-got pockets and they no-got buttons. You just pull them up and tighten up the puckering string around the waist, and there you are! Simple, what?"

"You won't sock me, Peg, if I tell you the truth?"

"I'm afraid I'm not going to like this," he scowled. "But go ahead and spill it."

"They not only look simple themselves, but they make *you* look simple."

"That's the way I want to look," he laughed it off. "Simple Simon Shaw!—that's me, fellows—who one day went a-fishin', for to catch a

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whale, and all the water that he had was in his mother's pail."

"You should have bought a pair of pants yesterday from your uncle," I told him.

"Yes," put in Scoop, "what became of that stuff of yours, Peg?"

"I've got it in my tub."

"Was it out on the wreck all night?"

"Yes."

"But didn't it get wet?"

"No, I had it under one of the dish pans."

Dee-Dee came up then in character.

Father: "Well, my sons, how fared you in your search for a cave? What manner of report have you?"

Ernest: "A very good report, papa. Come! Follow me up this path."

Jack: "Yes, come on, father—and you, too, Fritz. We have something to show you up here."

Ernest: "There, papa! Look under that ledge."

Father: "A cave! Eureka! Congratulations, my sons! Congratulations!"

Ernest: "We really should name it Pig Cave, papa."

Father: "Pig Cave? Why such an inelegant name as that? It appears to be in every way a very pleasant little cave."

Going on then, Scoop gave his reasons for wanting to call it Pig Cave—it was a squeal

from the pig, he said, that first had drawn our attention to it. Then he told about the fight, and Red's tumble down the hill.

"Well, it made a good story, anyway," laughed Peg, at its conclusion.

"Oh, but it's true—every word of it," declared Scoop. "Isn't it, Jerry?"

"It sure is," I waggled.

"You mean," stared Peg, "that Red and the pig actually rolled down the hill together?"

"They most certainly did."

"Oh, I can hardly believe it yet," came skeptically. "It sounds too perfect."

Scoop pointed down the path.

"Well, if you want proof, there it is."

It was Red staggering up the path.

"Ho, ho, ho!" jeered Peg, as he came up. "What luck that I should have lived to see this! Old pig-fighter Meyers himself, in person. When are you going to have another bout, Champ? I'd like to place a bet—on the pig."

"Oh, don't kid me, Peg," Red sank in a heap. "Honest, I'm a wreck."

With everything carried up, Dee-Dee and Peg then hurried back to the wreck for the tree-house lumber, telling us that they would land and unload on the other side, at the old camp site, as it was still undecided where the tree house was to be built. But ahead of that, of necessity, it was planned now to make a front and back door to the cave, as I had suggested. We needed

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a table and stools, too, and a cupboard of some sort. So as fast as the lumber was brought in and dumped on the south shore, Scoop and I hurriedly lugged up what we needed and started sawing and hammering.

Nothing more was said about a sundial now, Dee-Dee having brought in what he called the ship's "chronometer," but what really was nothing more than an old battered alarm clock. We had a place for this inside, and when it showed eleven I dropped my work and started getting dinner.

Red began to take more interest in life when he saw the fires going.

"What are we going to have for dinner, Jerry?" he hungrily hung around.

"Mashed potatoes, for one thing, if you'll get some water from the spring to boil them in," I busily told him.

"I'll help peel," he offered instead.

"Thanks," I quickly took him up on that. "But we can't peel till we get some water to wash them in. So grab those pails over there and snap into it."

"Hey!" he blinked. "This is a gyp! I didn't mean I'd do both jobs."

"If you don't," I told him flatly, "you won't eat."

"But I'm all shook to pieces, Jerry," he began to whine like an old man of ninety. "I couldn't carry a pail of water up that hill on a bet. Have

a heart! You're better able to get the water than me."

"Suit yourself," I left it entirely up to him. "If you're that bad off, you probably wouldn't care to eat, anyway. And it'll be that much less for me to cook."

"Oh, all right!" he grabbed the pails and stomped off. "But if I topple over down there," he glowered back, "it'll be your fault—you slave driver!"

"Well, don't topple over into the spring," I pleasantly called after him. "For we've got to use that water while we're here. And it won't taste so good with you floating around in it."

"*Ya!*" he mugged back.

While he was gone I looked up the biscuit recipe on the baking-powder can.

"How many do you think you can eat?" I asked Scoop.

"What?" he stopped his work to ask.

"Biscuits."

"Are you going to make biscuits, Jerry?" his eyes glowed.

"I'm going to try. It doesn't sound so hard. But I won't guarantee how they turn out. For this is my first effort."

"Well, you go ahead and make them," he loyally waggled, "and I'll eat my share, no matter how they turn out."

"What are you working on now?" I looked it over.

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"Is it that punk, Jerry?" he grimaced.

"The big door?" I guessed.

"No," came blandly, "it's the table top. And after that poor guess I think you better go out and start your biscuits. You have no eye for carpentry, that's certain. I hope you're a better cook."

Red finally dragged himself in and he and I set to work with the paring knives, me doing three potatoes to his one. And when these were boiled, and the oven put on the fire in their place, I drained them, as I had seen Mother do at home, putting them up close to the fire, with the cover on, to keep warm.

On the other fire I had a panful of sliced ham—and did it ever smell good as it sizzled and sputtered away! I let it cook till a quarter of twelve, turning the slices every few minutes, and then, into the grease, I dumped fifteen eggs—scrambling and seasoning them with salt and pepper.

At the very last I had to call on Scoop to help me, as I had planned on peas, too—so he took charge of these, first bringing them to a boil and then draining and seasoning them with butter and pepper. I was down on my knees myself, patting down the biscuit dough on a short wide board that had been brought in. The directions said to pat the dough down, then fold it in and pat it down some more. So I patted and folded, with almost as much dough sticking to my hands now

as I had on the board. I had flour all over the front of me, too, and all over my face. Scoop told me I ought to make a short job of it and jump into the biscuit tin myself.

But I finally got through with it. And with the buscuits in the oven, I went at the potatoes, mashing and seasoning them with butter and salt.

At twelve we had everything ready, with fresh water in the pitcher, and a big pile of bananas for dessert, and everything. But the others didn't come up, though the noon whistle sounded plainly. And when Scoop ran down to hurry them up, thinking they somehow had missed hearing the whistle, they weren't there. Their raft was there, he excitedly reported on his return, and the lumber that they had brought in was there, but the two wreckers themselves had completely vanished.

Until then I had been having the time of my life. It had been a lot of fun cooking all that stuff. I had wanted to make it one of our best meals there—a sort of pattern for the other fellows to follow when it came their turn to cook. I had wanted to show them what could be done, with a little care and effort.

But now, with Dee-Dee and Peg gone, I didn't care a rap about the dinner. I didn't care how it turned out, or if I ate any of it myself. For I knew what the double disappearance meant—though it was hard for me to comprehend how

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the fat man had accomplished it without us hearing something of it. For it wasn't like Peg to give up without a struggle. And if there had been just one alarming outcry we would have heard it.

But there had been no outcry. The double disappearance had been effected with almost uncanny silence. And it was this that scared me. For I *was* scared. For a minute or two I was scared stiff.

And then, in another minute or two, it was all over—though it was a good many minutes, I want to tell you, before I fully got the shivers out of my legs. For the two wreckers hadn't been spirited off by the fat man at all. The lightened hull having floated off the mud bar, with a draft of only a foot or two, they had plugged the boiler and fired up, and now, after rounding the east end, were merrily chugging down the north shore—as we learned, with our fears turning into wild joyful shouts, when the deep frog-like whistle suddenly sounded below.

“And did you know about this?” I went at Scoop, when we were all together again on the beach.

“No—honest, Jerry,” he crossed his heart.

“But didn't you notice that the wreck was gone?” I persisted.

“I didn't think anything about the wreck, with their raft there,” he shrugged. “But it was dumb—I'll admit. So go ahead and razz me.”

"This is where we have one up on the Robinsons," laughed Dee-Dee. "They had a sailboat. But they never had a boat with a steam engine in it."

"But aren't you afraid it'll sink?" Scoop looked out at it. "For almost all I can see is bare ribs—where you pulled the boards off. It looks like the picked ribs of some monster, with a boiler and engine in the middle."

"That's the fun," laughed Dee-Dee. "It's ten times as much fun riding around in it now, fellows. We can go any place in the wide-waters, too."

Machinery is Red's hobby.

"Can I take it out now, Dee-Dee?" he begged.

"If you do, you'll miss your dinner," I told him.

"When will dinner be ready, Jerry?" Dee-Dee quickly asked.

"It's ready right now," I told him.

"Well, listen!" came eagerly. "Let's bring it down and eat it on the boat. It'll be fun. What do you say?"

"Shall we, Jerry?" Scoop asked me, his own shining face showing plainly enough what he wanted to do himself.

"Anything that suits the rest suits me," I returned obligingly.

So we all loaded up our plates and set out, first making a complete circuit of the island, and then skirting the outside shore clear around. Along

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with our plates we had brought down the biscuits in one of the covered kettles, and a pail of drinking water. We had butter and seasoning, too. In fact, we had everything that we would have had on shore, the bananas included—and all the fun of the trip besides.

And, boy, I want to tell you that it was just about the peachiest fun that ever came *my* way! And was I glad that I had fallen in with this imaginative free-wheeling kid! I was glad that he was safe, too, and not tied up somewhere, as I had thought in that first frightened moment or two.

CHAPTER XVI

BAD NEWS

FINDING THEMSELVES practically abandoned on the south shore, the ducks found their way around that afternoon, quacking happily when they finally caught sight of us moving about in front of the cave. The chickens, too, plainly bewildered by the changing events, and acting as though they expected every minute to be pounced on themselves and done away with, wandered over, nervously scratching up and down the ravine throughout the balance of the afternoon, and roosting, when night came, in one of the near-by trees.

But the change was a terrible upset to old Bossy Bell. She couldn't get at our stuff now, to snoop into it, though she tried plenty hard, from both ends. Finding herself stopped above, she mooed there for an hour or so, and then scrambled down the hill and around to the other end of the narrow ledge path, and mooed there. But that didn't help either, she found. Next she tried climbing out on the ledge directly over the cave. Scoop and I were just putting the finishing touches to the front door, our last job there, when suddenly we heard a long melancholy overhead

"Moo-o!" And when we looked up, there she was looking down at us, almost with tears in her eyes. For a minute or two we were scared that she might jump down. But fortunately she knew better than to do that.

Then old Toby joined her. First we'd hear a "Hee-haw!" at the foot of the path, and then a begging "Moo-o!" at the top. This would stop for a minute or two, after which we'd hear the "Hee-haw!" at the top and the "Moo-o!" at the bottom. The goat and pig, too, stopped for a look, but soon were back grazing again. Bossy Bell, though, didn't know enough to do that. All she did was chase up and down hill. She just about tuckered herself out that afternoon, Peg finding, when he sat down that night to milk her, that there wasn't enough milk there to fill the cream pitcher.

"Well," I asked Dee-Dee, when he came down at three for some wire, "have you started your tree house yet?"

"Definitely, brother—definitely," he buzzed around.

"Where are you building it?"

"In the big oak, up on top."

"Hey, Dee-Dee!" Peg then called down. "Get some rope, too, for the ladder—and a saw."

"How high up are you building it?" I further asked Dee-Dee, as he pawed through the rope pile.

"About five feet."

"And are you going to make a rope ladder for that?" I laughed.

"Of course. The Robinsons had a rope ladder."

"Yes, but they went up forty or fifty feet. They needed a ladder."

"Well, you just wait till to-night," he ran off laughing.

"Now, what did he mean by that?" Scoop puzzledly looked after him.

"Oh, some more pretending, I suppose," I shrugged.

"But surely he doesn't expect us to sleep there."

"He talked like it."

"Oh, rats!" growled Scoop. "Why should we cramp up in a tree, when we have the cave all fixed up?"

"The Robinsons did it," I laughed.

"Well," he bluntly decided for himself, "you can be a Robinson to-night if you want to, but I'm going to be myself and sleep here. For I heard the rumble of thunder awhile ago, and I'm not going to get caught out in another downpour like last night. And I'm not going to risk breaking my neck, either."

"Five feet wouldn't be much of a fall," I told him.

"Well, I've told you what I'm going to do," came determinedly. "I'm going to get some grass and leaves, for a bed, and sleep here."

But I intended myself to sleep where the fun

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was, rain or no rain. So when it came time to turn in, with the sun gone now and the night shadows eerily creeping in, I followed Peg and Red up the rope ladder, Dee-Dee below, in character, calling to us to watch our step and not slip. To hear him, you would have thought the tree house was up a hundred feet or more.

And what a tree house! There were four levels, as I remember, each balanced on a separate limb, and all boyishly wired and nailed together. It was safe enough, so far as the floor boards and their supports were concerned—Peg and Dee-Dee had seen to that—but a crazier-looking contraption you never saw in all your born days.

Scoop stuck it out in the cave till about nine, and then came up the hill with his bedding, telling us, when we let the rope ladder down for him, that he got lonesome for us. But I think myself that that back cave was what brought him up. He wasn't quite so sure about the new door there.

The sky hadn't looked so favorable when we turned in. Those rumbles that Scoop had mentioned had seemed more menacing, too. But everything had cleared up swell. And satisfied now that there would be no need to run for the cave during the night, as we had earlier thought we might have to do, we contentedly dropped off.

But summer storms, I guess, are pretty tricky. Anyway, that one was. For no sooner had we dropped off than it started sneaking back on us.

It picked up a lot of wind, too. And then, with everything ready, it heartlessly pounced down on us, first blowing us out of the tree, tree house and all, and then drenching us.

Picking up our belongings as best we could, with the rain still coming down in buckets and the thunder and lightning banging and snapping all around us, we hit miserably for the cave.

"Oh, was I ever a dumb-dodo to leave here!" wailed Scoop, when we finally got there and got a fire going under the ledge.

"You haven't anything to kick about," Peg wheeled on him. "For what if the tree itself had gone down? One of us might have been killed then."

"And it would have been my fault," Dee-Dee paled.

"Not necessarily. I wanted to build the tree house just as much as you. And I didn't hear any objections from the others. It was just as much one's scheme as another's. But fortunately we got off with just a few scratches. That's why I say we shouldn't kick about a few wet clothes."

"I'm going to let mine go till morning," I wearily threw them down in a soggy heap. "For I'm too tired to monkey with them to-night."

"Yes, fellows," Peg similarly threw down his own, "you might just as well turn in and forget about them for the present. For we haven't enough firewood on hand to dry them out, anyway. And the way the water's pouring over that

ledge, I don't think there's much hope of getting any out there very soon."

"Are we going to sleep on the floor?" Red took an unenthusiastic look around.

"I am," grunted Peg. "But you can try the ceiling, if you want to."

"Boy, it's going to be plenty hard, if you ask me," Red tried it with his foot.

"How about those sheets?" asked Dee-Dee, looking around. "They're still here, aren't they?"

"Yes. I think they're over there in that dark corner," I pointed.

"Oh, sure!" he ran over, with the lantern. "And here's a dry blanket, too. So we aren't going to be so bad off, fellows. Scoop, spread your stuff out. Then we'll spread the sheets over it, and use the blanket for a cover."

"How about the towels?" I suggested.

"Sure thing! We'll use those, too—for padding. Boy, we'll have a regular mattress here before we get through!"

And that's the way we turned in, finding, though, that it was still a pretty hard cramped bed, but finally dropping off one after another.

It was about ten when I got up the next morning.

"There, Jerry," Peg grinningly tossed my dried clothes at me, "go ahead and jump into them."

"How did this happen?" I sleepily looked them over.

"Oh, I got big-hearted and piled out at five.

For this is the day the picnickers usually show up here, you know—on Sunday. And I didn't want to have to run and hide myself, with a towel around me."

But the rain, I guess, had scared the picnickers off, for at four we still had the whole island to ourselves—Peg sending us out then for grass and leaves for the bed, and wonderingly coming in himself with our missing lunch basket.

"There's something queer about this, fellows," he told us. "And I've been trying to figure it out. Dee-Dee, tell me: Did you see this basket on the beach, after we landed with the tub raft?"

"No," Dee-Dee shook his head.

"How about you, Scoop? Did you see it on the beach?"

"No," came the answer.

"And you, Jerry?"

"No."

"Well," he waggled, "I most certainly didn't see it myself."

"Nor me, either," put in Red.

"Then what made you say that Bossy Bell ate it?" Peg went at him.

"Well—it wasn't there. And naturally I thought one of you had brought it in. That's the only way I could explain its disappearance."

"And you said Bossy Bell ate the bean dish, too!" I gave him a dig myself.

"Oh, but you knew better than that, Jerry," he squirmed. "I just said that—thinking that she

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had kicked it out into the canal with the rest of that stuff."

"Well," continued Peg, "that proves that whoever emptied the basket didn't get it on shore. Now, does anybody remember putting the basket aboard? Suppose we start again with you, Dee-Dee."

"No," Dee-Dee shook his head, as before.

"How about you, Red? Did you put it aboard?"

"No."

"And you, Scoop?"

"I thought Jerry brought it aboard."

"How about that, Jerry?" quizzed Peg. "Did you have it when you jumped aboard?"

"No," I told him.

"But, Jerry, didn't you notice it in the rowboat?" asked Scoop. "For that's where Red and I left it."

"The rowboat wasn't there."

"All right," Peg continued. "Let's check up on that—did any of you fellows move the rowboat?"

"No," the four of us answered together.

"And what have we found out?" Peg summed up. "Each of us thought that one of the others had taken the lunch ashore. And Scoop says that he thought Jerry got it out of the rowboat. But Jerry says the rowboat wasn't there. So the final answer is that someone *stole* the rowboat, with the lunch in it, then came here and ate the lunch.

The rowboat was here when we got here—hidden in the willows, where I just found the empty basket. And the fact that the rowboat was pulled in there out of sight proves that whoever brought it here that day did so for some secret purpose. Otherwise, the thief wouldn't have gone down there, to that boggy place. He would have landed on a good part of the shore. But he didn't—he rowed right by all the good parts. Evidently it was someone who knew that we were coming here. And he hurried here ahead of us to do something or get something. And it was someone from town."

"Oh, I bet I know who it was," growled Dee-Dee. "I bet it was that smart cousin of mine. And that explains those big footprints. You know, I thought they looked kind of artificial."

"What do you mean?" asked Peg.

"He probably rigged up some kind of a big wooden foot, with a peg of some kind for the other foot, to try and scare us out. And the wonder to me is that he hasn't been back with more of his tricks, to try and spoil our fun."

"Well, that's a guess," laughed Peg, "but I wouldn't call it a very good one myself. For we know that he was in town twenty minutes before we left. Still, he could have done it with an outboard motor. Does he have one?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then I think you better cross him off," advised Peg.

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"How about the organ-grinder?" was my suggestion then.

"Jerry! How did you ever think of it? Oh, boy! You hit the nail right on the head. He came for his monkey, of course. He took your money, Dee-Dee, and then stole the monkey from you. And, Jerry, that's why he looked so sneaking that day. He was intending to steal the first boat he could find. Why, it's as plain as day. You sure did yourself proud that time, Sherlock."

"How about the footprints?" reminded Red. "If the organ man just came for his monkey, how do you explain the footprints?"

"Oh, forget about the footprints," Peg waved that off. "Some kid probably made them, as Dee-Dee said."

"Or some monster," thoughtfully put in Scoop, with a queer look down toward the swamp.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Peg.

"I have a theory, too," waggled Scoop. "But I'm going to keep it to myself till I prove it. For if I told you what it was ahead of time, you'd say I was crazy—it's so wild."

"Oh, tell us now," I begged.

"No," he shook his head. "But you fellows can help me prove it after dark, if you want to."

Supper over, and the dishes washed, we built a big fire in front of the cave and sat around it till nine, Scoop telling us then to each get a sheet from the cave and follow him to the spring.

"I'm expecting someone or *something* to come

here for a drink," he told us when we grouped around him there in the dark, the moon not having come up yet. "So scatter, fellows, and hide. Keep down till I yell *thirteen!* And then jump up, with your sheets over your heads—and whatever it is, grab it."

"Suffering cats!" squeaked Red. "It isn't liable to be a tiger, is it?"

"You saw the footprints," Scoop told him.

"You mean *him?*—the guy with the big foot?"

"That's who I'm laying for."

"Say! I don't get this at all," puzzled Peg. "You don't really believe, do you, that there's some big-footed guy hiding in the swamp?"

"Sh-h!" cautioned Scoop, with an important gesture. "Do as I tell you and don't ask so many questions. But remember, when you grab—hang on."

Red got down by me in the rocks.

"Gosh! This is almost as jolly as going to your own funeral, isn't it, Jerry?" he shivered.

"It's certainly plenty exciting," I admitted.

After what seemed hours I caught the sound of something across the island.

Scoop peeked around a rock a few feet away.

"He's coming, Jerry. He just got out of his boat."

"For Pete's sake who is it?" I chattered.

"The man with the big foot. You were right about him, Jerry. He was sent here by the fat man to bump Dee-Dee off. He has a hide-out

down in the swamp. Naturally he has to have drinking water. And it's my theory that he sneaks in here for it after dark."

"But you made us think that you were laying for some kind of a monster. Why did you do that?"

"Oh, just to make it more exciting," he tittered.

"But it *is* just a man, huh?—with a big foot?" I made sure of that.

"That's the way I have it doped out."

"But if we're going to grab him, why not just grab him?" I suggested. "Why monkey with these sheets?"

"Well, he may be a pretty tough customer. So I thought we better scare the wits out of him first."

Where Scoop got that wild theory of his, I can't imagine. Looking back, I can see all kinds of holes in it myself—holes that he himself should have detected at the time. For he's a mighty smart boy, as I've said before.

For instance, if some man with an enormously enlarged foot had been sent there for the purposes given, why hadn't he made some move against Dee-Dee, instead of just hiding near by? And if it were his habit to come nightly to the spring, why hadn't we detected more big footprints thereabouts?

Scoop was so ashamed of what followed that he never would discuss it himself. We were terribly ashamed, too. But maybe I better hurry

on and tell you what did happen, so that you'll know *why* we were so ashamed.

Finally the signal that the leader had given us came, and out we popped in our sheets, each with his own idea of how a ghost should act on such an occasion, and how it should sound.

I gave a low moaning gurgle myself. At the same instant there was an ear-splitting boyish scream.

“Dee-Dee! Help! Help!”

Instead of the expected big-footed hireling, it was little Bobbie! He had come there all alone, in a canoe, to bring Dee-Dee the bad news that his fat uncle's scheming moves against his unprotected aunt had succeeded at last. Her mind had completely broken down. And the law having appointed the schemer her guardian, with complete charge of her fortune and affairs, he had hurried her off to a private insane asylum.

CHAPTER XVII

OFF TO THE RESCUE

DEE-DEE WENT back into town with Bobbie at ten, telling us to get up steam and wait on the the south shore for a possible signal from the tow-path directly across. To save time, he might come out in a taxicab, he said. So if we heard a honk, or saw a light over there, we were to quickly steam across for him.

"I certainly never expected anything like this to happen," he told us finally, a changed boy now. "And yet, it's just like the Robinson book, isn't it?" came wonderingly. "Remember how the mother was stolen and how the others had to start out blindly to rescue her? Well, we may have to do the same thing. So be sure and wait up for me, fellows. I may need you before morning. But first I'm going to find out in town just what happened after I left there."

At twelve I told the others to fix up some kind of a bed in the bottom of the boat and turn in. I'd watch an hour, I said, and then get another one up for an hour. It's a good thing we did this, too, each of us thus getting a little sleep by it. For it wasn't till eight the next morning that we finally got the prearranged signal from an ice truck in the towpath.

"I learned they didn't allow taxicabs in the towpath," Dee-Dee explained, when we gathered around him there. "But old Pete here—and he's a good friend of mine, fellows—said that *he* could get through. He's going to help me free Aunt Trudy, too—if we can just find out now where she is. But no one (except my uncle, of course) seems to know that—not even the doctors who pronounced her insane. Boy, I've been all over the country since I left here with Bobbie. How many miles have we turned up, Pete?"

"Almost eighty," the swarthy whiskered driver drawled, with an expert spit over our heads into the canal.

"First," Dee-Dee continued his story, "I went to see our family doctor. But he couldn't tell me a thing—except what he had heard himself. For do you know what that crooked uncle of mine did? He brought in four strange doctors—supposedly brain specialists—not a one of whom had even seen Aunt Trudy before. I know this to be true, for I've talked with all of them—though a couple of them didn't like it very well when I got them out in the middle of the night. I thought, when I first started chasing after them around the country, that they were crooks, like my uncle himself. But they weren't. They're all reliable well-thought-of doctors. And what they told me sickened me at first. There wasn't the slightest doubt about it, they declared—Aunt Trudy was a raving maniac. And there was

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nothing I could do about it. She wasn't capable of managing her own affairs, and if the law saw fit to put everything into my uncle's hands, I'd just have to make the best of it."

"Then she really *is* crazy, huh?" I got in here, distressed by the thought of it.

"Wait a minute—let me finish. I'm telling you what the doctors in turn told me. But *I* wouldn't believe them. Knowing that uncle of mine, I knew there had been some kind of crooked work. Aunt Trudy had been drugged, or something—to make her appear crazy. And finally I got the truth. And do I hate that uncle of mine for what he did! And do I hope he gets his pay for it!"

"You an' me both, Dee-Dee," came with another expert spit, from the truck.

"But what did he do, Dee-Dee?" my impatience wouldn't let me wait.

"He got Aunt Trudy away some way—probably took her off at night. Then he brought in a crazy woman, just her size—who really was crazy. He dressed her in Aunt Trudy's clothes, and after letting her run around a little bit outside, for the neighbors to see, he called in these specialists, who, of course, all agreed that she was hopelessly insane. And do you know how I found out about the trick, fellows? Well, I kept on asking one of the doctors over and over again if he was sure she was crazy. And he said, yes—she was so crazy even that they had to hold her

hands, during the examination, to keep her from yanking her own hair out. I said, do you mean she pulled the hair right out of her scalp? He said, yes. And I said, did you see the place in her scalp that the hair came out of? Again he said, yes. But I didn't stop there. I said, would you get up on a witness stand and *swear* that what you saw was my aunt's real own scalp? And he said he most certainly would. Then, I said, it wasn't my aunt that you examined—for she's as bald as a billiard ball. If she had tried to pull her hair out, her whole wig would have come off. And there's the story, fellows. Getting the doctors' report, and getting himself appointed Aunt Trudy's guardian, my uncle then took the crazy woman back where he got her. And that probably is where Aunt Trudy is this very minute. She's no more crazy than you or I, fellows. But she *will* be crazy if we don't get her out of there. One of the doctors, on our side now, gave me a list of all the private asylums within fifty miles of here—see," it was showed to us, "here they are on this map. But which is the right one? That's the riddle."

"Are any of them called sanitariums?" I asked quickly.

"Yes—the most of them are. Why?"

"Well, is there one there with 'wood' in it?—like Edgewood, or something like that?"

"Yes," Dee-Dee ran down the list, "here's a Lockwood Sanitarium."

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"Then that's the one," I told him. "It's run by a friend of your uncle's—for he called him Charley. I overheard him phoning about it the day I phoned home. I was in one booth and he was in another, right beside me. I never dreamed, though, that I'd ever have occasion to recall the conversation."

"Did you hear that, Pete?" Dee-Dee excitedly asked the driver.

"Yep," came with the usual accompaniment.

"Do you know the place?"

"Ol' Doc Lockwood's j'int?—wa'al, I reckon I oughta. I've bin totin' ice thar fur the past ten years. I'm even calculatin' to make the cook thar my wife, when I git enough money saved up to furnish a little nest."

"Then, Pete, consider yourself just as good as hitched for life."

"Heh?" Pete drawled. "What's that?"

"My aunt's a very rich woman, Pete. And if you help me get her out of there, with your friend's help, and defeat that crooked uncle of mine, you'll get a check big enough to furnish two nests. I'll promise you at least five hundred dollars."

The driver promptly started his motor.

"All right," came crisply. "Jump in."

"Would you like to go, too, Jerry?" Dee-Dee singled me out.

"Sure thing," I jumped at the chance.

"Me, too," Peg and Scoop spoke together.

"Yes," Red finished it up, "let's all go."

But we couldn't do that—someone had to stay with our stuff. So, to be fair, we drew straws—Scoop and Red getting the lucky ones.

It was a long day for Peg and me—for it wasn't till almost night that the others returned. And this was the night, mind you, that we had promised to report at home!

Sighting the ice truck finally, we quickly steamed across, first Red tumbling out, in that important swaggering way of his, then Peg and Dee-Dee, with the biggest grins any pair of boys ever had—and finally little old Aunt Trudy herself!

"Goodness me!" she started sputtering the minute she saw the wreck. "Is that the steamboat that I gave you twenty-five dollars to buy, Dee-Dee Freeling?"

"That's what's left of it, Aunt Trudy," he grinned.

"But what happened to it?" she stared.

"Oh, we needed some lumber for a tree house. So we just ripped it off."

"Well, I most certainly won't feel very safe crossing in *that* thing. The water's almost lapping in."

"Are you going across?" I asked Dee-Dee.

"Sure thing. We're going to have supper here. And then we're all going to town."

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"The four of us'll soon have to start for home, if we can find a boat," I told him.

"Your boat's in town, Jerry—right where you left it. I saw it there. Whoever used it accommodatingly brought it back, and apparently it's been there ever since."

Once on the island, Aunt Trudy took complete charge of the supper arrangements, and to see her flying around, and singing to herself, you never would have suspected that she had just been rescued from a private insane asylum.

"What took you so long?" I asked Dee-Dee, as we waited around for the supper call.

"We had to wait for that cook. She thought that she could get Aunt Trudy out at noon, when she took her lunch up. But the man who runs the place took the tray at the door and carried it in himself."

"Did he have your aunt tied up?"

"No, but he had her locked in a room with iron bars on the windows."

"But what excuse did the ice man give for hanging around there so long?"

"Well, in the first place he pulled up in front of the big iron gate where you get into the place, and honked. A guard let him in, old Pete pretending then that he had motor trouble. First he'd pound on one side of the motor, and then he'd pound on the other, saying things under his breath that were supposed to help the act along."

"Where were you fellows all this time?"

"Hiding in the truck, with the ice."

"And is that all you did all day?—just hide in the truck?"

"That's all we could do, Jerry."

"But what's Red stepping around so important for? I thought, from his actions, that he alone had laid out at least six guards."

"Oh, he just feels big, I guess, because he got to go and you didn't."

"And then what?" I prompted.

"Well, the cook failing at noon, we just had to wait till tea-time, as she called it."

"And this time she succeeded, huh?"

"Five hundred dollars' worth, Jerry."

"And when you got your aunt in the truck, I suppose your friend Pete pronounced the motor fixed and drove off."

"No—and that's the funny part. When he got ready to go, he couldn't. The motor wouldn't start."

"Oh-oh!"

"Yes, that's just the way we felt—oh-oh! And then came the fire."

"Fire?" I repeated. "What fire?"

"The place completely burned to the ground while we were there, Jerry. There was an explosion of some kind—some kind of a private cooking system, or something like that. Anyway, in just a few minutes the whole building was ablaze."

"Did everybody get out?"

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"Everybody but Aunt Trudy."

"You mean—they think she burned up?"

"Well," he grinned, "she wasn't there, with the other inmates."

"But what are you grinning about?" I shivered.

"Oh, I was just picturing to myself how surprised Uncle Port is going to be to-night, when we show up. He doesn't know it, but he's practically sitting in a cell himself—and that crooked sanitarium doctor with him."

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

"HEY, BOSSY BELL!" loudly called Peg, when it came time to leave. "Where are you? I want to say good-by to you."

The thought of leaving there, and going back to school, just about sickened me.

"I guess I did too much pretending," I quietly told Dee-Dee. "I feel more like Jack Robinson than I do my own self. Instead of *going* home, it seems to me as though I'm *leaving* home."

"I noticed you've been awfully quiet," he commented. "You didn't eat much supper, either."

"I couldn't," I confessed to him. "Everything on the table seemed to say: 'Well, Jack Robinson, take a last look at me. For you'll never see me again.'"

"Oh, but you shouldn't feel that way, Jerry," he laughed. "We're only about twenty miles apart. And we can camp here every summer."

"Yes, but we never can have this fun over again, Dee-Dee," I declared. "It was pretending. And yet it was real, too—because it was all new. It's one of those things that you can do only once. When the surprises are gone, the most of the fun is gone."

Peg finally found his cow.

"Well, Bossy Bell," he sniffed, a monkey to the last, "the time has come for us to part. But though you pass out of my life, you'll never pass out of my heart. You'll always be my first love. This island, with its memories of you, will be a shrine in my heart. And when I'm an old man, with grandchildren on my knee, I'll always tell them how near their granny came to being a cow."

"Mercy me!" stared Aunt Trudy. "What in the world are you talking about? Have you completely lost your senses?"

"He never had any," Red put in.

Peg jumped sniffing into the boat.

"Quick!" he told Dee-Dee, dabbing his eyes. "Get me away from here before my emotion completely overcomes me."

"What *is* the matter with him?" I heard Aunt Trudy anxiously whisper to Dee-Dee, as we started off, with Red, as usual, running the engine.

"Oh, he's just having a little fun," Dee-Dee laughed.

"And are those his real pants?" she whispered further, with a sharp look at them.

"No—his own burned up. I made him those—out of tent cloth."

"Did you hear that?" I nudged Peg.

"What?" he grunted.

"Aunt Trudy was just wondering what museum you got those pants of yours out of."

"Well, don't you worry about these pants!—I'm going to have a good pair when I get to town—bu-lieve you me! I'm going to try and get my uncle to drive us home, too."

"Now, whar to?" the ice man inquired, when we were all settled in the back of his truck, after our trip across.

"Home," Dee-Dee gave the order.

"You can drop me off near the Golden Eagle clothing store," Peg spoke for himself.

"Yes," I told the driver, "we'll all four get out there."

"Oh, no!" Dee-Dee quickly opposed that. "You fellows are going home with me."

"Not me," declared Peg. "Not in these pants, I don't."

"He was going to buy himself a pair from his uncle," I explained to Dee-Dee.

"I'll get him a pair at home," Dee-Dee quickly settled that. "You keep right on driving, Pete—till you come to our house. Then let us out quietly."

"Oh, dear!" fluttered Aunt Trudy, when we finally got out. "I'm afraid to go any farther, Dee-Dee. For he's a terribly wicked man. And after what he's already done, he'll be desperate. He might shoot."

"When did you say he took you away, Aunt Trudy?"

"The same night that you left. He got in through my bedroom window. I woke up just

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as he reached my bedside. But before I could scream, he clutched my throat. I thought he intended murdering me then and there—for there was murder in his eyes. But instead, after gagging and binding me, he and that other man I told you about took me away in their car.”

“And did you know then that they intended to substitute a crazy woman for you, Aunt Trudy?”

“No. I knew nothing of that till you told me yourself, though I realized, of course, that I was in a madhouse. I thought his scheme was to *make* me crazy, and then claim my property. But I made up my mind I wouldn't let him drive me crazy. I wouldn't even let myself worry about it. For I knew, Dee-Dee, that somehow you'd get me out of there.”

“Then you weren't surprised, huh, when the cook told you that I was down below in an ice truck?”

“Not in the least.”

“Well, I never would have left you alone, Aunt Trudy, if I had had the slightest inkling that anything like that was liable to happen. I thought as long as you had the law on your side, that you were perfectly safe. The lawyer told me you were. I never dreamed that Uncle Port would kidnap you. He certainly took a desperate chance to get your property. And he's going to pay a terrible price.”

During the time that Dee-Dee and his aunt had been talking in the yard, the lights had been

going on and off in the different rooms of the big house.

"It's Junior," Dee-Dee reported, after a guarded peek through one of the lower windows. "He's been gathering up my books all over the house. And now he's in the library pulling more out of the cases there."

"Is his father there, too?" quickly inquired Aunt Trudy, with an indignant look toward the house.

"No. He must be away. His car's gone."

"Then I'm going in," came determinedly, "and put a stop to that boy's work. For he isn't gathering up those books for any good."

"How about me?" drawled the ice man, who had been standing around in the background. "Do you want me to come in, too?"

"No," Dee-Dee told him. "You can go home now, if you want to, Pete. And thanks for everything, till you're better paid. You've been a grand friend."

"But if I'm goin' to really earn that five hundred dollars, don't you think I oughta take at least one crack at that overstuffed uncle of your'n? Ever since he hit town, I've bin itchin' to connect with his beezer. This might be my last chance, Dee-Dee," came wistfully.

"All right, Pete," Dee-Dee laughingly gave in. "You stick around out here, and if Uncle Port tries to get smart when he shows up, you pop him one."

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Aunt Trudy was sputtering on the front porch.

"Dee-Dee! Come here—quick!" she tersely called.

"What's the matter, Aunt Trudy?" he bounded up the steps, with the rest of us at his heels, old Pete having settled himself against a near-by tree for a comfortable wait.

"The door's locked. And I can't find the key that I always kept here under the mat. I guess we'll have to ring to get in."

"I'll ring in a few minutes, Aunt Trudy. But first I want you and the boys to slip in the back way. You'll find that key, all right."

"But why can't we all go in with you?" came petulantly.

"I want to make Junior think I'm all alone. I have a reason, Aunt Trudy. So please do as I say. And don't you make a sound in there till I call you. That goes for you fellows, too. Just keep out of sight—all five of you—and listen."

Aunt Trudy sputtered all the way around, and in. Then we heard the bell, and young fatty go to answer it.

"But why shouldn't I come in?" we first heard Dee-Dee. "It's my home."

"Not any longer it isn't," came insolently. "It belongs to my father now."

"But where am *I* going to live?"

"Why should we worry about you?"

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it,

maybe I better pick up my stuff and get out of here."

"You don't pick up anything in this house, lame-brain. For everything here is ours now."

"But I ought, at least, to have the right to pick up my own clothes and my books," came humbly.

"I've already bargained to sell your books."

"Well, can I have my clothes then?" came meekly.

"No."

"But they won't fit you."

"I'm going to sell them to the second-hand-store man, along with your books and other stuff. But I'm going to keep your model airplanes."

"Do you think Aunt Trudy would approve of this?"

"Poof! That nut! You had it soft, didn't you? Money for this and money for that. Money for a crazy shipwreck even. But it's all over for you, pauper. It ended the day they took that crazy old fool of an aunt of yours away."

There was a short silence.

"I feel sorry for you, Junior," Dee-Dee's voice then came slowly again. "I didn't think that any boy could be as mean and heartless as you are. You say that you and your father have everything here now. And it all came from my aunt. *Your* aunt, too. And yet you stand there and call her a crazy old fool."

"She *was* a crazy old fool."

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"By 'was,' you mean that she's gone—is that it?" came quietly.

"Yes. The asylum that she was in burned down this afternoon, and burned her up with it. That's where my father is now. The man who owns the place sent for him."

"But wouldn't you be the least little bit glad, Junior, if it turned out that Aunt Trudy wasn't dead, after all?"

"Why should I be?" the fat kid snarled. "That old bat never did anything for me. You were the pet."

"Well," sighed Dee-Dee, "I guess there's no way out of it. I guess I'll just have to do it. I had hoped, though, that you might show a little remorse and save me the trouble. But you asked for it, cousin. And now you're going to get it."

"Hey!" came the frightened squeal. "You get away from me."

"Put up your fists, you big fat coward."

"Please, Dee-Dee! Don't hit me."

"Sell my books, huh? Take *that*."

"Ouch! Please, Dee-Dee! I won't sell them. You can have them."

"You big fat baby! I ought to take you down and wipe up the floor with you, for all those mean things you said about Aunt Trudy. But with the father you've got, I don't suppose I ought to. With his example before you, you never had a chance to grow up right. And again,

knowing what's coming, I say I'm sorry for you. Yet I despise you, too."

Here the front door flew open and in waddled the fat man himself, another man following.

"What's going on in here?" came gruffly.

"What are you doing here, Dee-Dee?"

"He hit me, pa," the fat kid sniffled.

"Who is it, Port?" the other man quickly inquired.

"The nephew I told you about."

"Oh!"

The fat man cleared his throat.

"Ahem! I have some bad news for you, Dee-Dee," he gave himself a concerned distressed air. "Your poor Aunt's mind completely broke down after you left. Sad, sad! A pitiable case. Poor Gertrude! We had to take her away to an asylum—the law ordered it. And this afternoon she burned to death there."

"Yes," Dee-Dee evidently figured he might just as well end the whole matter then and there, "I know that you took her away to a crazy house. And this man with you, I suppose, is your accomplice."

"Now, Dee-Dee," came the bland reproof, "don't lose your head, or engage in bitter words. You won't gain anything by that."

"Is this Dr. Lockwood?" Dee-Dee evenly continued.

"Yes," the man spoke for himself, "I'm Dr.

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Charles Lockwood, the owner of the burned sanitarium. I deeply deplore the fire and its sad consequences, of course. But already the state's fire commission has absolved me of all blame in the matter. It was one of those tragic things evidently that no one could have anticipated and forestalled."

"Well, this is pretty fine!" came with grim satisfaction from Dee-Dee. "I have the two crooks here together. I hardly had expected such rare luck as that."

"Why don't you go ahead and kick him out, pa?" the fat kid came in here. "Didn't you hear me tell you—he just socked me. And then you stand there and let him call you a crook."

"He *is* a crook," Dee-Dee threw down the challenge, in a ringing voice. "And that other man with him. They're both kidnapers. That's what they are! Yes, Uncle Port, you better start paling. For I know how you dragged poor Aunt Trudy out of her bed in the middle of the night, and then substituted that crazy woman for her."

"That's a lie," the fat man finally found his voice. "I did nothing of the kind."

"Then why are you trembling so?" sneered Dee-Dee.

"It's my heart," came hoarsely. "I'm subject to these spells. Junior, run over to the other house and get me my box of pills. You'll find them on my dresser."

"All right," came daringly from Dee-Dee, when the fat kid had gone. "Now that you've got *him* out of the way, what do you propose doing with me?"

"You little brat!" the fat man's real venomous nature then came out. "I don't know where you found this out, but you'll never leave here to repeat it."

"What are you going to do with him, Port?" came anxiously from the doctor.

"You'll have to lock him up, Charley."

"I don't want to get in this any deeper."

"It isn't a question now of what we *want* to do, it's what we must do to save our hides."

"Plenty scared, aren't you?" jeered Dee-Dee. "And now brace yourself, Uncle Port, for the biggest shock of all. All right, Aunt Trudy."

There was a gasp from the men as she stepped into sight.

"Yes, gentlemen," she pleasantly told them, "it's really me. It isn't a ghost."

The fat man lunged for Dee-Dee.

"Grab her, Charley, and I'll take the boy. We've got to get them out of here before Junior gets back."

And it was then that old Pete swung in through the front door and got in the crack that he had been yearning for.

Smack! And down went old fatty like a log.

The doctor desperately tried to draw a gun.

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But Peg, from the other way (and still in those crazy pants of his!), was on him like a cat.

Which just about brings me to the end of my story.

When the case came to trial, the two men were sent up for life, the property, of course, all returning to Aunt Trudy. To-day, Junior is in a military school down east, his aunt forgivingly paying the bills. And it's to be hoped that when he gets out of there he'll be a changed boy. As Dee-Dee said that memorable night, with his father for an example, the kid never had had a chance to grow up right. He deserved a lot of sympathy, though I was awfully disappointed myself that night that Dee-Dee didn't give him at least one more good crack.

Shortly after the two prisoners were taken away that night, Dad and Mother came driving up. But instead of giving us Hail Columbia, as we expected, and hurrying us off home, they had come to tell us that we could camp with Dee-Dee till the next Sunday, if we wanted to, some kind of an unfinished plumbing job at school having delayed its starting.

So we all went back to the island—this time Aunt Trudy, too—a touching scene following between Peg and his four-footed love! And the fun we had there!—and finally the fun of getting those animals and fowls back to their owners! It's something that will always stand out in our memory.

To my surprise, when I finally got home, everybody kept asking me about my "Cuckoo Camp." I tried to tell them that it wasn't really *my* camp, but Dee-Dee's. But they just laughed all the harder. The stories that came back about us sitting in the rain, with the cow on one side of us and the donkey on the other, and the drenched fowls all around us, and then Red and the pig rolling down the hill together, and the wind blowing us out of the tree, seemed awfully funny to them. "Jerry Todd's Cuckoo Camp!" "Jerry Tod's Cuckoo Camp!" I heard it on all sides. So finally, when I got ready to put the story down on paper, that's the title I gave it (with Dee-Dee's consent)—"*Jerry Todd's Cuckoo Camp.*"

The day after the shipwreck, a swarthy-faced organ-grinder put on a "clown" act in Tutter, with a monkey and a huge rubber foot. He also had a fake peg-leg, the kids who saw the act told me. So I guess it's plain enough who ate our lunch that day and made those tracks. I suppose he thought that was funny! . But he was good enough to return our rowboat to the dock where he had found it, so we aren't complaining.

Old Pete got his five hundred dollars, too—and a bride!

Oh, yes! Red started a new saying in Tutter that fall. Every time something happened to him that he didn't like, he'd roll his eyes and yell: "This never happened to the Robinsons!" The other kids got to saying it, too, and then the

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adults around there. Maybe it's even got to your town by this time.

And that's all. But I'll be back soon in an old whizzer of a mystery story—"*Jerry Todd, Detective.*"

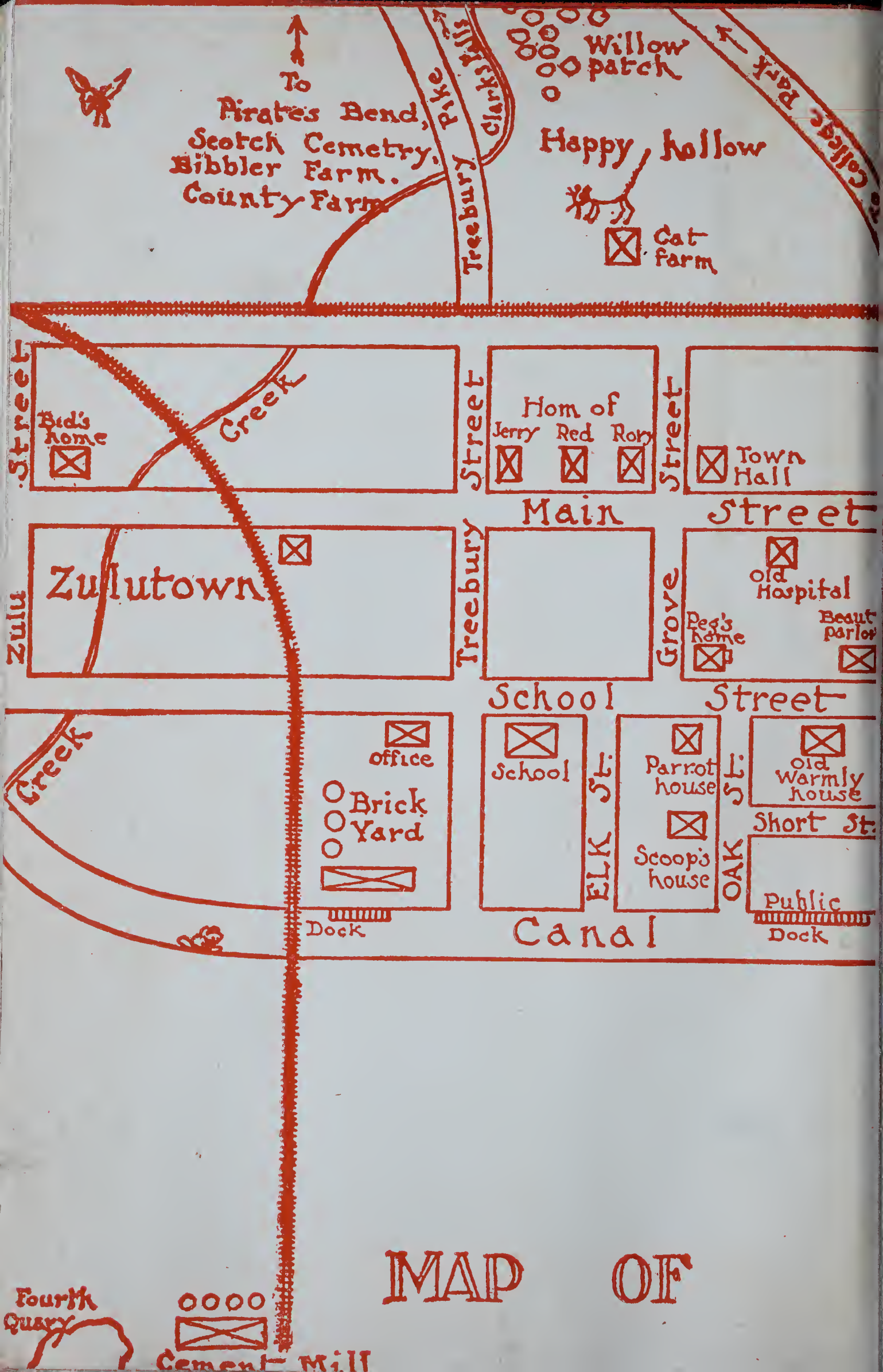
What would you think if you were walking down the street and suddenly met yourself face to face? Oh, you say that doesn't make sense, huh? You say it couldn't happen.

Well, something very much like that happened to me. It was a case of a double, of course. But who was this mysterious double who looked so much like me that even my own parents were fooled? And what was he doing in Tutter?

It's a story with a weird ghostly angle—packed full of mystery and surprises, and with heaps of fun in it.

So be looking for it. As I say, it's on the way! And now—so-long, everybody!

THE END



To
 Pirates Bend,
 Scotch Cemetery,
 Bibbler Farm,
 County Farm

Willow
 patch

Happy hollow

⊗ Cat farm

⊗ Bid's home

Creek

Home of
 Jerry Red Rory

⊗ ⊗ ⊗

⊗ Town Hall

Main Street

Zulu

⊗

Treebury

Grove

⊗ Old Hospital

⊗ Peg's home

⊗ Beaut parlor

School Street

Street

⊗ office

⊗ School

⊗ Parrot house

⊗ old Warmly house

○ Brick Yard

ELK ST.

⊗ Scoop's house

OAK ST.

Short St.

⊗ Dock

Canal

⊗ Public Dock

MAP OF

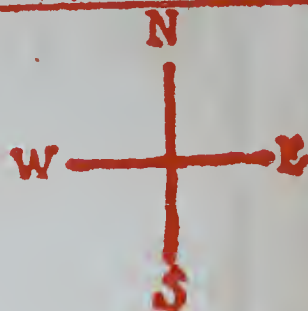
Fourth Quarry

○○○○

⊗

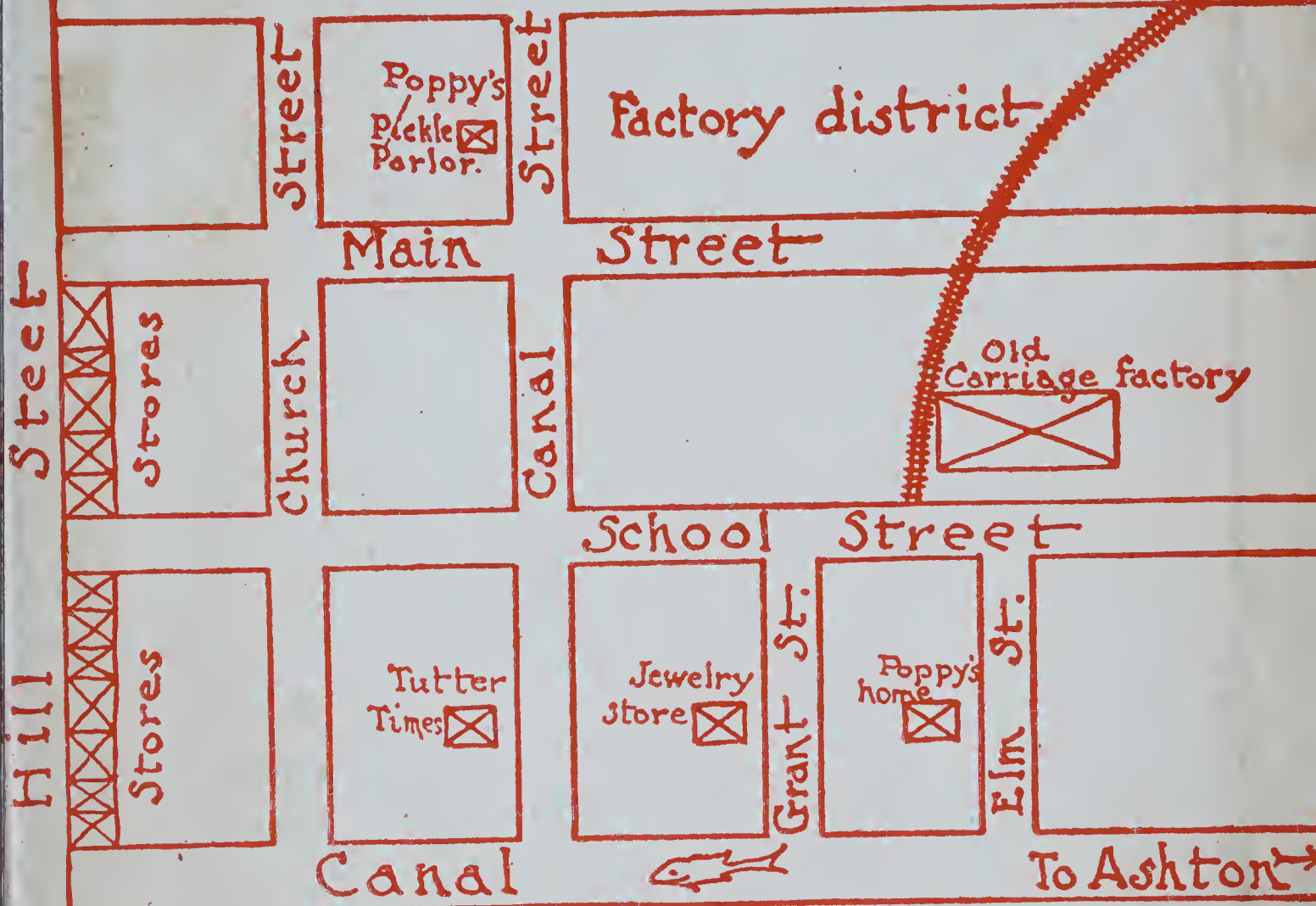
Cement Mill

Road to Ashtown →



25
Depot
☒

Chicago and Rock Island R.R.



TUTTER ILLINOIS

